

BILLS OF EXCHANGE BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER (Hon. H. Daglish), in moving the second reading, said: This is not one of the Bills which I announced last night that I proposed to proceed with; but it is a very short Bill, and of a purely formal nature, intended to correct an error recently discovered to exist in the main Act. The object of the Bill is to facilitate the transaction of ordinary commercial and banking business, and to carry out the purpose it was thought the original Act carried out. The amendment is introduced at the request of the associated banks, and is precisely the same as an Act that has been passed this session in the adjoining States of Victoria and South Australia. The original Act did not carry the meaning it will carry when the Bill is passed; and this amendment has been rendered necessary by a decision of the Supreme Court in Great Britain. I do not propose, at this stage, to go into detailed explanation, but if members wish it, I shall be glad to do so in Committee.

MR. H. C. RASON (Guildford): I support the second reading, and am obliged to the Premier for bringing the Bill on this evening. I can give to the House this assurance, that if the Bill be passed it will confer on the banking institutions no power other than that which has been exercised for years past. The custom has been to act as is set out in the Bill. No one here has ever questioned the practice, and I do not suppose anyone ever will; but in view of the decision given in the mother country, it is well we should have an enactment here making it clear that the custom that has obtained in the past will be the custom in the future.

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.

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

ADJOURNMENT.

THE PREMIER moved that the House at its rising do adjourn until 10:30 a.m.

(Friday). He asked members to come prepared to deal with the Loan Bill and the Loan Estimates, which would be the first items on the Notice Paper. No doubt we would be able to conclude the business and arrange for prorogation on the following day. He thought members were anxious to assist for this purpose, and he had to thank them personally for the amount of time they had given to the sittings to-day, yesterday, and the preceding day.

Question passed.

The House adjourned at seventeen minutes past 1 o'clock a.m., until 10:30 Friday forenoon.

Legislative Council,

Friday, 23rd December, 1904.

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THE PRESIDENT took the Chair at 3 o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS.

PAPER PRESENTED.

By THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Amendment of regulation under the Mining Act 1904.

STANDING ORDERS SUSPENSION.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. J. M. Drew) moved:

That, in order to expedite business, the Standing Orders relating to the passing of public Bills and the consideration of Messages

from the Legislative Assembly be suspended during the remainder of the session.

As members knew, it was the desire of the Government to prorogue to-morrow; and if that event was to take place, it was necessary to suspend the Standing Orders, to deal with Bills coming from another place.

HON. R. F. SHOLL: It was a very bad principle to suspend the Standing Orders. Although business was always rushed at the end of the session, measures should not be rushed through with too great haste.

HON. W. T. LOTON: No matter of a particularly debatable character would, he supposed, come up for discussion.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS was not aware of any debatable matter that would come forward; but if such did come forward, members could easily arrive at a decision one way or the other. He was opposed to the principle of a number of Bills being rushed down at the end of the session; at the same time, it was unavoidable. If the Standing Orders were not suspended, Bills of an important character, some of which had already been considered by the Chamber, would have to be passed out.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Would the Minister give members some idea of what business would come forward to which the motion would apply?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: There were the Local Inscribed Stock Bill, the Lands Act Amendment Bill, dealing with the timber industry, the Appropriation Bill—

HON. W. T. LOTON: The Loan Bill.
Question put and passed.

LOCAL INSCRIBED STOCK ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

ALL STAGES.

Bill received from the Legislative Assembly, and read a first time.

SECOND READING.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. J. M. Drew), in moving the second reading, said: The object of the measure is to enable the local trustees of our inscribed stock to arrange for the investment in London of the sinking fund accruing to

trustees. The necessary authority does not now exist; therefore the trustees have no opportunity of utilising the sinking fund in London in accordance with the requirements of the Act, and no means of utilising it locally. This Bill was introduced at the request of the trustees. If any farther explanation is needed, I shall be happy to afford it in Committee.

HON. J. W. HACKETT (South-West): While there is power to invest this sinking fund, there is no person in London duly authorised to make investments; and the object is to enable such persons to be appointed. There is a flaw in the existing Act.

Question passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of 61 Vict., No. 8, s. 8:

SIR GEORGE SHENTON: The Bill was brought in at the request of the trustees of the sinking fund—the President of the Legislative Council, Mr. Harper, late Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, and the Auditor General. They were appointed by the Governor-in-Council. It was pointed out to the trustees by the Agent-General in London and also by our bankers that the present Act did not give power to appoint delegates in London by whom the sinking fund might be invested.

HON. R. F. SHOLL took strong exception to the Bill. The trustees consisted of two political members and a Government official. The sinking fund was a guarantee to investors. He had every confidence in the trustees; but other persons of a different character might be appointed. We ran a great risk in passing a Bill which would enable the trustees to deal with the sinking fund.

THE MINISTER: These trustees had been appointed for some time. The measure was to enable them to delegate their powers to other persons in London.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 3, 4—agreed to.

Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Read a third time and passed.

LAND ACT AMENDMENT BILL
(FORESTRY).

ALL STAGES.

Received from the Legislative Assembly, and read a first time.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. J. M. Drew): In moving the second reading, I wish to state that this Bill is introduced with the object of giving effect to some of the recommendations of the Forestry Commission, appointed by a preceding Government. Those recommendations have been considered by the present Ministry, who are fully prepared to confirm them. By this measure vested interests are in no way interfered with. Existing rights will in every way be preserved. The Bill is based not only on the recommendations of the Commission, but on legislation already existing in various parts of the world where the timber industry is flourishing. Clause 2 gives power to appoint an Inspector General of Forests, for whom provision is made on the Estimates, and whose appointment is necessary if due care is to be exercised over this important industry. Clause 3 charges the Inspector General with the conservation, management, and control of State forests and timber reserves. Clause 4 is a new departure. It provides for the appointment of an advisory board to advise the Minister and the Inspector General. Some Ministers for Lands, myself included, with very little knowledge of the intricacies of the timber industry, have had to accept the recommendations of people who perhaps knew no more than they. The board will advise the Minister and the Inspector General. Clause 6 gives power to pay the board fees for attending meetings, and to recoup them for travelling expenses. The remuneration will be reasonable. The fees have not been fixed, but can later on be reviewed by Parliament. Clause 8 enables a member of Parliament to become a member of this board without violating the Constitution Act. As some members may be specially fitted for the work, it is not deemed desirable to exclude them; and I do not think the House will think it necessary to take this precaution on the score of possible bribery.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: What are the fees?

THE MINISTER: They will be prescribed by regulation; and the Government, if they make them too high, are responsible to Parliament. The Government cannot be expected to prescribe the fees in the Bill.

HON. J. D. CONNOLLY: It is reasonable to suppose that the Government, before introducing the Bill, considered what fees would be paid.

THE MINISTER: Certainly not. The fees will be fixed by regulation. The Bill was placed in my hands last night for the first time. It is introduced on the recommendation of the Forestry Commission. At the same time, I thoroughly indorse everything in the Bill. Clause 9 provides for the declaration of any Crown land as a State forest or timber reserve. Clause 10 provides that no State forest shall be alienated or dealt with except as authorised by the Act and regulations. Clause 11 confirms the instruction given by another place two years ago, that no more timber leases should be issued, and since then none have been issued. Clause 12 enables the Governor-in-Council to grant permits in certain circumstances, under conditions defined in the clause. Clause 13 sets forth the conditions under which a permit shall be liable to forfeiture, and it will be noticed that the clause provides in such a way as to discount any attempt at monopoly. Clause 14 gives power to issue licenses for cutting piles, poles, or barks, subject to the payment of royalties proportional to measurement. Clause 15 enables the Minister to set apart reserves for occupation by workmen and other persons employed in connection with forests or reserves. Clause 16 simply deals with regulations for the general conduct of the business. Clause 20 gives necessary power to an officer of the Lands Department to arrest trespassers. It appears that under the present law, although an officer of the department may find a person committing a breach of the regulations, he has no power to take action, except to summon the offender. This clause gives the necessary power to arrest the offender. I now move the second reading of the Bill.

HON. R. F. SHOLL (North): I really do hope this House will not allow an important Bill like this to pass at this late stage of the session, seeing that the

Bill has been before us only a few minutes; and there is in it a policy that I am not in favour of, by which the Governor-in-Council may grant permits to hewers to fell timber and barks, and to arrange for certain royalties. I believe the Government have already been allowing this to be done in certain timber reserves set apart for the conservation of the flora and fauna of the country. Men have been allowed to go on these reserves to hew sleepers, thereby destroying the best of the timber. There are certain clauses that are not objectionable altogether; but what I do object to is that at this late stage of the session an important measure of this kind should be hurried through all its stages on the last day. This is a Bill that may well stand aside for six months, and that interval will give time to see how the amendment of the Land Act will be affected, and to enable members to give due consideration to the provisions of the Bill. I move an amendment:

That the Bill be read a second time this day six months.

HON. J. W. HACKETT (South-West): I realise the strength of the objection to passing a Bill of this importance at this late stage of the session; particularly in view of the insufficient discussion, and as the Minister must admit the insufficient information which has been placed before members. Nevertheless, this Bill is urgently necessary to prevent a worse thing happening; therefore I hope that a Bill of this kind will be passed, to give a much-needed control to the Government in regard to our forest resources, and enable them to deal with a number of abuses that have sprung up, and which without this legislation they cannot prevent. The Bill may well be amended so as to operate for only one year, and in this way the measure can be reconsidered next session. The Forestry Commission were very emphatic in recommending that provision of some kind ought to be brought into force at once for preventing certain evils which are set forth in their report. To my mind the condition of our forests is an urgent matter, and I do not think we can safely wait for another year before putting into effect legislation that will preserve them from farther serious injury. Hon. members can hardly be

aware of the way in which sleeper hewers—hard-working men making their livelihood arduously, and for the most part honestly, in spite of the revelations made lately—are spread over the best of our forests, and in the absence of sufficient supervision and inspection are doing very great mischief. In fact, the sleeper hewers, by common consent, are breaking the law knowingly and avowedly, because they say they cannot get proper terms from the Government under existing legislation, such as will enable them to make a fair living. I do hope the motion for postponing the Bill will be withdrawn.

THE PRESIDENT: The amendment is not seconded.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: If the Bill is to be only experimental, and for a period, I hope the mover of the amendment will be satisfied to restrict its operation in the way I have suggested.

HON. J. D. CONNOLLY (North-East): I had almost made up my mind to support the amendment for postponing the Bill; but after the remarks of the last speaker, it may be the better course to limit the operation of the Bill to a short period. I strongly object to a Bill of this kind, introducing new principles and amending an existing Act which deals with one of the most important industries of this State. Such a measure should not be brought in on the last day of the session, after the Standing Orders have been suspended. I have not heard one word from the Minister to justify the Government in bringing in the Bill to-day.

THE MINISTER: The clauses in the Bill speak for themselves.

HON. J. D. CONNOLLY: If I had been in my place when the motion was made to suspend the Standing Orders, I would have objected to it if I had known that new Bills were to be introduced. It is very wrong for the Government to suspend the Standing Orders, and then introduce new Bills. Members may be absent who have not the remotest idea that this or perhaps other Bills would be introduced after the suspension of the Standing Orders; and unless the Minister agrees to limit the operation of the Bill in the way suggested, I shall vote for the amendment.

HON. H. BRIGGS: I bowed significantly to indicate that I seconded the amendment.

THE PRESIDENT: It was the hon. member's duty to call my attention to that, immediately I had said the motion was not seconded.

HON. J. D. CONNOLLY: Unless the Minister agrees to the amendment suggested for making the Bill operative for only a short period, say till the 1st October next, which would give about nine months, I shall vote for the amendment.

HON. W. MALEY (South-East): I welcome a Bill of this nature, although so very late in the session. I remember that when the late Mr. Marmion was Minister for Lands, I mentioned to him in a conversation the necessity and the importance of bringing in a Bill of this nature. The Minister at that period had no extensive acquaintance with the timber industry or its possibilities, and did not seem to realise the importance to which that industry would grow. Now that members know we have two very valuable timbers, jarrah and karri, and know that we have also a large number of trees, several varieties which in days to come will be in great request for all kinds of joinery-work, particularly for the manufacture of wagons and vehicles, no doubt the importance of this Bill will be appreciated. I must admit, however, that it comes too late in the session to deal with the measure adequately; for I should like a week at the least to consider the numerous clauses, no less than 20, one clause embracing 15 subclauses, and all these containing matter of considerable importance and value to the State. Therefore a measure of this nature should be thoroughly discussed; but I for one am satisfied to allow the Bill to pass the second reading, and I will support a provision to limit its operation to 12 months.

HON. G. RANDELL (Metropolitan): One cannot criticise a Bill of this kind after seeing it only a few moments; but I recognise that this is an attempt to give effect to the desire so often expressed that something should be done to preserve our forests from serious injury. As far as I can see on a cursory perusal of the Bill, there is nothing objectionable except perhaps in Clause 14; but as I see there is an advisory board to be appointed,

which will no doubt consist of men of experience and knowledge in connection with forestry, I think I can trust the Government to see that a suitable board is appointed, and suitable not merely because those appointed on it are to be members of Parliament. It is highly essential that we should have men to whom the country can look with respect and confidence in this matter. It is of the utmost importance to this State that our forests should be well cared for. As to the appointment of an Inspector General, although he would be under the guidance or at any rate under the advice of the advisory board, yet I think the appointment of such an officer with full power as prescribed by the regulations cannot but be of some good. There are in the regulations which it is proposed to authorise the Governor to make many provisions such as have been asked for in most departments for a considerable time past, and which have been urged, I believe, by the Forestry Department and by the advisory board already in existence. The Governor will be able to make regulations to prevent all unnecessary injury to or destruction of growing timber, also to protect from cutting or injuring trees of any specially-named kind or below a standard size, and all seedlings and saplings, likewise for the planting of trees and the renewal of forests; and there are other subjects on which regulations may be made. The planting of trees is a very important matter, and in my estimation one which cannot be thought of too highly. The country is eminently suitable for the production of a large class of trees which we may term exotics, and the timber we have here ought to be preserved as far as possible. The waste which has occurred in the past ought not to be allowed to endure one moment after it is possible to prevent it. I hail the Bill with a considerable amount of satisfaction. I am glad to see that although at a late hour in the session, a move is made in this direction. Whether it is desirable that the operation of the measure should be limited to the 1st October is a question on which two or three opinions may be entertained. If we limit it to the 1st October there will be no opportunity as far as I can see of testing the measure, and therefore no

satisfactory conclusions can be arrived at by either the Government or the country. I hope the hon. member who mentioned that will not insist on it. I think we ought to have sufficient time to have some satisfactory idea of how the measure is going to act.

HON. J. D. CONNOLLY: It will be very easy to re-enact it at that time.

HON. G. RANDELL: Then I am afraid we shall not get the experience, because there is the creation of the machinery.

HON. J. D. CONNOLLY: Re-enact it for another 12 months.

HON. G. RANDELL: There are other matters to be undertaken, and I hardly see how it is possible for the Bill to begin to operate in three months or perhaps more than that. I do not say, make it permanent, but I think there should be a longer time than nine months.

HON. J. D. CONNOLLY: Twelve months.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Twelve months.

HON. G. RANDELL: Then we shall have it just when we are going to prorogue again. I say that members should think it over. Perhaps the time may be made a little later than that prescribed. It might be made the middle of November or the 1st November, or something of that sort. I do not quite like the next clause:—

The office of a member of the advisory board shall not be deemed an office of profit within the meaning of the Constitution Act 1889.

The principle is wrong. It gives the Ministry of the day the opportunity, if they so desire, of appointing men who are members of Parliament, and for the sake of their being members of Parliament, and not for the knowledge and experience they have gained in the forests of the country. I do not like it. I must say I think the principle is bad. In my opinion members of Parliament should be excluded. There should be no possibility of political influence in this direction. The only other clause on which I have some doubt as to how it will work is Clause 14, the latter part of it. The clause reads:—

The Governor may by regulation prescribe that licenses to hew and fell timber for piles, poles, or barks shall be granted subject to the payment by the licensee of royalties proportional to the measurement of all piles, poles,

and barks felled or hewn, in addition to or in lieu of the annual fee prescribed by the principal Act.

We have seen in the papers some controversy which has taken place. It is a question whether this may not be used to the advantage of one section of the timber-cutters and to the injury of another; whether it may not be used to the advantage of the hewers and to the disadvantage of those persons who are now carrying on business on a large scale; in other words, companies. It struck me in reading it over that an opportunity of closely examining this and comparing it with the Act in existence might be advantageous. Those are the only two parts of the Bill to which I wish to take any exception. I shall certainly support the second reading. There is a universal desire that some protection should be afforded to our forests and that they should be extended.

HON. S. J. HAYNES (South-East): Whilst I in common with other members of the House deprecate important Bills of any length coming down at this period of the session, I am perfectly satisfied there is at present necessity for, at all events, many of the clauses of this Bill. I am also satisfied that no member can but be impressed with the necessity of many of the clauses. The hon. member who has just sat down has drawn attention to two clauses which I had marked and which are very objectionable indeed, one being Clause 8 and the other Clause 14. With reference to Clause 8, I shall always oppose, personally at any rate, an attempt to tinker with the Constitution so as to allow members of Parliament to accept office of profit like this, inasmuch as I think it is exceedingly objectionable, and will lead—I will not say on the part of the present Government or any past Government—to very serious corruption. I would like to call attention of the House to this phase, whether the clause as it stands is not an amendment of the Constitution Act. If so, that clause would have to be passed by a majority of members of each House, and would then have to be reserved for His Majesty's assent. [Interjection by the MINISTER.] It is against the Constitution for any member of Parliament to accept an office of profit. Should not such an alteration go through the same

formula as an amendment of the Constitution Act?

HON. G. RANDELL: It will not hurt the Bill to take that clause out.

HON. S. J. HAYNES: I do not think it will. I should support a proposal that the clause be struck out. With respect to Clause 14, I should certainly be very pleased to hear more from the Minister in charge of the Bill, for the reasons already given by my friend Mr. Randell. I do not like the wording of it, and it might be an injustice to one class of the community at the expense of another. I shall support the second reading of the Bill. As to the time referred to, nine months is hardly sufficient to give effect to the clauses of the measure. I do not think much damage would be done in that time subject to such modifications as the wisdom of this House may think fit to carry out. In my opinion a reasonable time would be two years. [Indications of dissent.] I deprecate the lateness of the time at which the Bill has come down, but I would certainly like to see many of the clauses become law even at this late period of the session. I think we ought to do the best we can to put the Bill through, having regard to the exigencies of the matter.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY (East): I rise to support the Bill as it stands. I feel with other members it has been brought down very late in the session, but I also realise that a very strong case has been made out why a Bill of this nature should be passed. We have not had very much time to inspect the provisions of the new Bill. In fact it has only just been placed before us. I rose to support Clause 8, which several members are inclined to strike out. It seems to me that by striking out Clause 8 we should debar some of the best men in the country from taking a seat on that board.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: It would be simply that they could not take the fees.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY: You may send these gentlemen on a week's tour through some very heavily-timbered country, and it seems very necessary that they should get their expenses.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: O, yes; they could get their expenses.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY: If they can get paid in that way, in my opinion they

are accepting fees under the Crown. [MEMBERS: No.] As a member of Parliament I would certainly take it that way, and I think this provision was made to enable them to do it.

HON. R. F. SHOLL: Under those circumstances it would not be an office of profit.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY: My view is that it would be so. I do not see why, if they are members of Parliament, they should not be paid.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: A pass can be given.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY: A pass does not pay their expenses, except railway.

MEMBER: They can get their expenses.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY: It seems to me desirable that the Bill should be passed. It would take practically nine months to get the machinery in working order; and it seems to me it would be infinitely difficult, if we hampered the Government with this limitation of nine months, to obtain the services of anything like a qualified man. He would consider the possibility, if he accepted that office, of being thrown out when the Bill again was brought before Parliament in nine months' time. I beg to support the second reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (in reply): I strenuously opposed the bringing forward of this Bill at so late a stage; but it was urged on me by various members of the Forestry Commission that the Bill was urgently needed in the best interests of the State; and when I reconsidered the matter from my experience of the dealings of the Lands Department with the timber industry, I decided to go on with the Bill. It is intended that the Bill should only continue until the Government get a chance of introducing another measure.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Do you accept the limitation?

THE MINISTER: Certainly. The Government expect to deal with the Forestry Bill next session. The Forestry Department will not be under the Minister for Lands, or not necessarily. The sections dealing with the timber industry in the Lands Act are very defective, and the powers are too limited, and in many instances we have had to conduct matters at random; but this Bill will give us the power; and if members

allow the measure to pass, the Government intend, at the earliest opportunity after the opening of the next session of Parliament, to introduce a Bill dealing with forestry matters comprehensively. I have no objection at all to the limitation of this measure to twelve months. I am perfectly agreeable that an amendment to that effect should be moved, but I do not wish many amendment to be made, for it may prove fatal for the Bill. However, on the recommendation of the Forestry Commission, which cost the country so many hundred pounds—and judging from the comments in the Press on its reports and decisions the work done was valuable to the country—even if members think in certain respects the Bill is defective, I will ask them not to be too critical, but to allow it to pass. The Government will give the opportunity, soon after the opening of the next session of Parliament, to revise what is done now. Until this Bill is passed there will be no power to appoint an Inspector General of forests. A man who is expert in these matters is essential if the control of the timber industry is to be effective and in the best interests of the State. An advisory board is most important. It is very doubtful whether any Minister for Lands, unless he be an expert in timber, could control the industry to the satisfaction of the public and in the best interests of the State. What can a Minister for Lands, without expert knowledge, know about timber? How can he decide on questions sitting in his office? It will be invaluable to the Minister if an advisory board is appointed similar to that in the Department of Agriculture. We receive valuable advice from that advisory board, and in almost every instance the advice of the board is acted on, for its members are persons who are impartial and who have ample time to deal with the matters that come under their attention. The Minister is only too ready to fall in with their views if he concludes that they are in the best interests of the community. I ask the House, even at this late stage, though it seems unreasonable to ask them at the eleventh hour to deal with a large measure, to take the measure on trust on the advice of the Forestry Commission, and pass it, even though they may consider there are possibly some defects in it.

HON. R. F. SHOLL: I did not wish to force my amendment. I moved more as a matter of principle, because I object to Bills coming down at the last moment; but I object particularly to Clause 8, which is really an amendment of the Constitution Act. I shall not press my amendment, but I shall strongly oppose in the future while in this House any important Bills coming down at the tail-end of the session, because due consideration cannot be given to them. As a revisory House we should have ample time to consider important Bills before they pass this Chamber.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE, ETC.

Clauses 1 to 7—agreed to.

Clause 8—Office of member of board not an office of profit.

HON. R. F. SHOLL: This clause should be struck out.

THE MINISTER: The Government had no particular desire for the preservation of this clause, except that there were certain members of Parliament who could give valuable advice on the timber industry. There could not be the slightest suspicion of political bribery in the matter. The fees would be very small, and the area of selection should not be limited. If the clause were struck out the Government would have to go outside Parliament for members of the board.

HON. G. RANDELL: There were equally good men outside.

HON. W. T. LOTON: The argument of the Minister that the Government intended to appoint one or two members of Parliament on the board was the strongest argument against the clause. It was one of the worst principles the Government could adopt, to offer members of Parliament emoluments for assisting them in administration. If members of Parliament were of such great importance that they should occupy these positions, let them cease to be members of Parliament. Surely a knowledge of this industry was not confined to members of Parliament.

HON. J. W. LANGSFORD: There were members of Parliament on the Forestry Commission who were paid for

their services; and surely they could be paid for the lesser service of being members of the advisory board. Restrictions should not be placed upon the duties a member of Parliament could perform, especially if a member had the capabilities and expert knowledge required for a matter of this kind.

THE MINISTER: The question of appointing any persons to this particular board had never entered into the consideration of the Government; but if he (the Minister) had any say in the matter, he would appoint certain members of Parliament on the board in the best interests of the country.

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

Ayes	...	...	...	5
Noes	...	...	...	6

Majority against ... 1

AYES.	NOES.
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. J. D. Connolly
Hon. J. W. Hackett	Hon. C. E. Dempster
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. S. J. Haynes
Hon. M. L. Moss	Hon. W. T. Loton
Hon. J. W. Langsford	Hon. G. Randell
(Teller).	Hon. R. F. Sholl (Teller).

Clause thus negatived.

Clauses 9 to 13—agreed to.

Clause 14—Royalty on timber felled for piles:

HON. G. RANDELL: Did the Minister take a note of what he had previously said about this clause?

THE MINISTER explained that under Clause 12 certain terms were given to cut timber in State forests, and Clause 14 could not affect the rights given under that clause.

Clause passed.

Clauses 15 to 20—agreed to.

New clause—Limit of one year:

HON. J. D. CONNOLLY moved that the following be inserted as a new clause:

This Act shall only remain in force till January 1st, 1906.

Question put and passed.

Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments, and the report adopted.

Read a third time, and returned to the Assembly with amendments.

BILLS, THIRD READING.

NAVIGATION, read a third time and returned to the Assembly with amendments.

NORTH FREMANTLE STREETS DEDICATION, read a third time and *passed*.

MOTION—FIRES IN AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS, COAL SPARKS.

Debate resumed from the previous day on the motion of the Hon. V. Hamersley, "That in the opinion of this House, in order to minimise the danger from sparks, Newcastle coal only should be used on trains passing through agricultural districts during the months of December, January, and February in each year."

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. J. M. Drew): It was my intention at first to have spoken yesterday, but I afterwards thought it would be wise to defer my remarks until to-day, so as to be able to furnish a more favourable reply to the House than I otherwise would have been able to do. I have the most cordial sympathy with the sufferers from the recent disastrous fires. I read in the newspapers that 120 miles of country had been denuded of grass, and that valuable property had been destroyed. Ever since I saw that, I have been using my influence with the Government in order to get some reasonable and wise decision as to this important question. We are not prepared to admit that these fires occurred through sparks from Government engines or sparks from the use of Collie coal. From my knowledge, fires occur in various parts of the country where there are no railway lines at all, and on almost every extremely hot day fires spring up, but from what cause I do not know. Whether it is the act of malicious persons or spontaneous combustion, I do not know, but on hot days in various parts of the State fires do occur. It is the duty of the Government to investigate the cause of these fires, and it is the intention of the Government to spare no pains to endeavour to arrive at a conclusion as to how these conflagrations occur. The Government have been and are now in an extremely awkward position in the matter. Dr. Jack, an eminent geologist, has been appointed to consider all matters as to the relative quality of Collie and Newcastle coals, and the scope of his inquiry will include the matter under discussion, as to whether the Collie coal is a greater spark-producer than the Newcastle coal.

HON. G. RANDELL: It will require a greater expert than Dr. Jack to decide that.

THE MINISTER: Any steps taken by the Government might be taken as an interference with the case which is *sub judice*. The Government cannot always stand on ceremony like that. On account of the seriousness of the question to a number of settlers, and the large amount of property destroyed, the Government have come to the conclusion that although it may be accepted that their action is an admission that Collie coal is a greater spark-producer than Newcastle coal, they intend to at once stop the use of Collie coal in the Eastern Districts during the harvest season. Although this may be taken as an admission that Collie coal is a greater spark-producer than Newcastle coal, the Railway Department has taken all possible precautions against fire, and for some time past when heavy banks are passed by locomotives, gangs of men have been despatched to see that fires are not created by the extra emission of sparks caused by the larger quantity of steam generated to enable the banks to be negotiated. The Commissioner and the Minister for Railways were responsible for the Bill which I succeeded in getting passed a short time ago. That Bill was brought forward to lessen the risk of damage by fire, and no sooner had that Bill been passed by Parliament than the Commissioner at once took steps to have the grass and other pasturage along the line effectually burnt off. I think I have said enough to convince members that the Government intend to do the right thing in the circumstances. I hope the motion will pass; because it will considerably strengthen the hands of the Government in giving effect to their determination.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY (in reply as mover): I am pleased to have the Minister's assurance that the Government realise the existing danger. In fairness to myself I must point out that the reason for the motion has been misunderstood and misrepresented. An idea is abroad that the motion was tabled in consequence of the fires which have recently occurred. I moved the motion prior to hearing anything about the fires. Several members realised the great danger of fire, particularly in the Eastern Districts where there

are heavy grass crops; and discovering that Collie coal was being used on the railways, I moved the motion in the interests of settlers and of the Government. It was entirely a coincidence that on the next day we read in the papers of the extensive damage, which has, I claim, resulted from the use of Collie coal. The Minister's speech made no reference to previous years; but I understand that preceding Governments directed that the use of Collie coal should in certain months be discontinued, in districts where there was danger of fire; and when I found that the coal was still being used, I thought it necessary that the House should pass a strongly-worded resolution. The motion does not make any direct charge against the Government, nor was such a charge intended. The object is to minimise the danger. Throughout the Eastern District most people are convinced that Collie coal is much more dangerous than Newcastle; and I think they have good grounds for their belief, after noticing the effects of the use of both coals. As to the spark-arresters mentioned by Mr. Brinage, I have been several times assured that they are not in regular use. I believe they are not so much spark-arresters as steam-arresters. When a train is ascending a heavy grade, and when more steam is needed, I understand that the spark-arrester, if on the engine, is thrown open to admit of a greater draught. The wind then catches the shower of sparks, and carries them over the firebreaks which have been made. I can indorse the Minister's statement that there are firebreaks; but on a day like last Tuesday, when the wind was high, sparks are carried a great distance. I do not say that engine sparks caused that fire last Tuesday; but notwithstanding what the Minister says of spontaneous combustion, it is extraordinary that all the serious fires have occurred along the railway line. If the grass caught fire spontaneously, fires would start all over the country. In each instance the fires have started when there was a north wind travelling towards the south from the railway. As I explained earlier, the motion is not aimed at the Collie coal industry, and will not apply except to agricultural districts where the grass is heavy. There is no objection to the use of Collie coal on the goldfields, in

scrub country, or in green country. I think Dr. Jack's inquiry is in the interest of the State; and I hope it will result in a more extended use of our Collie coal. We cannot do too much for that industry; and it is only at certain seasons that the motion seeks to prohibit the use of the coal in agricultural districts.

Question put and passed.

AGRICULTURAL BANK ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING, ETC.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. J. M. Drew): In moving that the Bill be read a second time, it is not necessary to make a second-reading speech on a measure which has already been before this Chamber. I move the second reading.

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.

Read a third time, and *passed*.

POST OFFICE SAVINGS BANK ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING MOVED.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. J. M. Drew): In moving the second reading of this Bill, I will simply refer to the clauses. The Bill will repeal that section of the principal Act limiting the amount receivable from any depositor to £150 in any one year, and to £600 in the whole. The Bill removes the annual limit, and increases the total to £1,000. In drafting Section 7 of the principal Act the draftsman omitted the word "first" before "day" in line 5. The groundwork of our savings bank legislation was taken from the English Act, which clearly states "first day." Clause 3 remedies the omission. Section 7 of the principal Act is farther amended by striking out the words up to "£300," and the proviso. This amendment removes the bar which the original Act placed on paying interest upon deposits exceeding £300. By Subsection (3) of the principal Act depositors are debarred from depositing any sum which is not a multiple of a shilling. The Bill provides that any number of odd pence may form portion of a deposit.

Clause 5 increases the amount which may be deposited annually by friendly societies and trade unions from £600 to £1,000. The expansion of the State renders this increase necessary, and it is thought that the amendment will induce a larger number of people to lodge money in the bank. There is no reason why the amount should be limited. If the people are willing to trust the Savings Bank, that is a matter which concerns themselves, or a matter between them and the bank. Clause 6 enables the Government to fix and pay a differential rate of interest where the balance to the credit of a depositor exceeds £500. Clause 7 provides for a joint account in the names of two or more persons. For instance, an account cannot now be opened by more than one trustee of an estate. The effect of this repeal and the substitution of Clause 9 of the amending Bill will be to very considerably extend the operations of the bank. For instance, societies, clubs, and institutions of all kinds, hitherto barred under the existing law, will be enabled to do business with the bank. I beg to move the second reading of the Bill.

HON. W. T. LOTON (East): I have listened with attention to the remarks of the Minister on this Bill; but he has not told us what is the necessity for it at this late stage of the session. It is a Bill that affects the community and also the Government to a great extent; and there is a principle underlying the amendments made by this Bill which seems to me to require careful consideration in this House and in another place. Dealing with the changes proposed to be made, and taking the first change in Clause 2, which amends Section 6 of the Act, the Minister is quite right in what he says on it. At the present time depositors may deposit only to the extent of £150 during any year, or a total of £600, without withdrawing. The principal Act states in the preamble that the Act was to consolidate the law relating to the deposit of small sums of money in the Post Office Savings Bank. It seems to me we have got beyond that stage considerably. It has been considered in the past that £150 a year was a fair margin for small depositors in the Savings Bank, and £600 as a total. The present Government are not satisfied with a limit of less than

£1,000. It would be difficult at the present time to find a number of small depositors who would be able to raise a thousand pounds for deposit in the Savings Bank. It seems to me the Government have not considered the wants of small depositors. I think they have been inclined to look at this question from their own standpoint and their own class. Their desire is to get as much money as possible deposited in the Post Office Savings Bank, so as to be able to make use of the money for Government purposes. They want money, and have been trying outside and inside the State to get it; and if they can now get a number of depositors to place money in the Savings Bank it will, at all events temporarily, suit their purposes remarkably well. Have they considered the question on the other side, that if the money is utilised by the Government for State purposes, and difficult times come, and those depositors whose amounts are practically at call cause a run on the Savings Bank and the Government have to produce half a million or a million of money at short notice—have they looked at the question from that standpoint? I do not think so. It seems to me the present limit in the Act is quite ample for the class of depositors who use the Savings Bank, that is the middle class. A person can deposit £150 and a total of £600 in that bank; so if you get a number of depositors of more than £600 to invest money in that bank, and the Government having been on the market for a long time past with inscribed stock and Treasury bills, and still on the market trying to borrow practically at par at 4 per cent., it will be an advantage for those depositors who have £600 to take up the inscribed stock or Treasury bills at 4 per cent., and they can also go on depositing in the bank. Their deposits being practically at call, they can go to the Treasurer in the morning and take up the inscribed stock which he is trying to sell. That stock is on the market from day to day. I trust I have shown that there is no necessity for the alteration proposed in the clause referred to. If the depositors are possessed of the full amount allowed to be deposited under the regulations at present, that is up to £600, all that those depositors would have to do would be to withdraw

the £600 and get 4 per cent. on the money by investing it in Government stock, instead of receiving $3\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. interest in the bank; and the depositors can commence re-depositing at the rate of £150 a year under the present conditions. As to the next alteration proposed in the Bill, in regard to the omission made in leaving out the work "first," there is very little advantage in making that alteration. At present, a person making a deposit has the interest calculated from the date of the deposit; but in this Bill it is proposed that the interest should be calculated from the 1st of the next month succeeding. At the present time the depositor gets interest from the date of deposit. There is nothing urgent in that alteration, and it will not facilitate the calculation of interest, because it can be calculated from month to month, and is so calculated at the present time. The next alteration proposed in the Bill is extraordinary, that is to enable sums under one shilling to be deposited. The Minister has told us that a depositor may deposit one shilling, but cannot deposit pence or parts of a shilling. This amendment is to enable a person, instead of depositing say 5s., to deposit 4s. 11d., or instead of depositing £1 he may deposit 19s. 11d. What advantage is that to the depositor? It is an alteration to increase the work of the department, but no real advantage; and it would take probably an extra couple of clerks to do this clerical work. Is this alteration really a matter of urgency. The next proposed alteration is to increase the total sum which any depositor may put into the bank, from £600 to £1,000. On this I need not say more than that there is no necessity to increase the total amount which a depositor may put into the bank; but the necessity is the need of the Government. What will they do with the money if they get it? Use it for Government purposes, not for legitimate purposes; and, as I have said, this change in the total amount of deposit may cause great difficulty in times of scarcity of money, overtrading, and that sort of thing; times when almost every depositor will want to withdraw the amount of his deposit in the savings bank; and then, as I have said, the Government may have to find half a million or a million of money to meet a

run on the bank. The depositors will be no better off, because those who have got over £600 can place it now at a higher rate of interest by investing in Government securities or in Treasury bills. I will not discuss the next amendment proposed in the Bill. It may or may not be desirable to make this change, but it is not desirable to make frequent changes in our rates of interest for the Post Office Savings Bank. Therefore there is no great necessity for this change. The next proposed alteration is in Clause 9, a repeal of Section 17 of the existing Act, and the substitution of this clause. This change, instead of allowing as at present the friendly societies to make deposits in the Post Office Savings Bank, will allow municipal corporations, roads boards, friendly societies, trades unions, and other associations, societies, etcetera, to do their banking business with the savings bank, instead of with ordinary banks. This is only a start in the direction of establishing a State Bank of Issue, and is getting in the thin end of the wedge. If we are to discuss this principle, I do not think hon. members are prepared to discuss and finish the principle to-day. If the Government are in favour of the principle of a State bank, and that the savings bank should be a bank of issue, they can bring in a Bill to that effect, and we shall then know where we are. For the reasons I have given, I am entirely opposed to this Bill, and I move an amendment:

That it be read a second time this day six months.

HON. S. J. HAYNES (South-East): I do not know that there is any pressing need for the Bill at the present time. It seems to me that the present savings bank limit is pretty liberal for what I understand are the objects of the Post Office Savings Bank. When persons go beyond that amount other avenues are open, business institutions which give them equal advantages except in one respect, and that respect I am going to mention now. I can well understand that the savings banks are patronised by some who otherwise would have a regular banking account. We find at the present time that the local banking institutions charge what I think is an exorbitant fee for the keeping of the accounts of their customers. They charge for every account

a person may have, whether it is trumpery or otherwise, 10s. 6d. every half-year, and in the other States the highest amount charged is at the rate of 10s. 6d. per annum. I believe that the original motive of the banks in making a charge—a very proper one—was to prevent a multiplicity of small accounts, which give a lot of trouble and may be a loss to them. It is an imposition upon the customers of the bank to charge one guinea per annum for each account, even if they have half-a-dozen accounts. If the Bill be passed it will certainly be the thin end of the wedge in starting a State bank. Whether a State bank is wise or not is a very big subject, and no doubt it will be threshed out some day; but I do not think this is the occasion to do it. Personally, I do not think there is any necessity to do it. Attention has been drawn to Clause 9, providing that any municipal corporation and other institutions may keep their accounts in the savings bank. I should support that clause for the very reason I gave, that the charge made by the banks at the present time is a most extortionate one.

HON. R. F. SHOLL (North): I believe that when the savings bank was first started it was with the object of encouraging thrift, so that small thrifty people who could save a little money out of their earnings could put it in the savings bank and obtain interest; but it appears to me that the thrifty person is not now considered to the extent the more wealthy one is. Increasing the amount to £1,000 will affect the banks in this way, which I think is unfair. Instead of money being left at call at the banks, anyone who has £1,000 which he may not require for a couple of months will put it into the savings bank and get interest for it, because he can draw it out whenever he requires it. I do not think it is good policy to encourage that sort of thing, neither do I think it is good policy to give too much money to the Treasurer of the day, whoever he may be, to play with. I think there is a legitimate and proper way to raise money, and that is to go on to the loan market and borrow, and if the money be unobtainable the proper way is to curtail expenditure and live within our means. The bank was established for a special purpose, and I think we should adhere to that as nearly

as possible. If the measure be passed, all money at call and not bearing interest at the ordinary banks will be removed from those banks and placed in the savings bank. That will interfere with the business of the banks, and if there happened to be a run on the savings bank there would, as stated by Mr. Loton, be no money available at the banks to come to the rescue of the Government, or at any rate they would not be in the position they otherwise would be to come to the rescue of the savings bank. I do not think there is a great danger of a run on the savings bank, because people know that the funds and assets of the State are available to find that money. Still, I think the principle is a wrong one and that it will place in the hands of the Government more money than it is desirable should be placed in their hands. For that reason I think the Bill undesirable, so I shall support the amendment.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE (South) : I certainly think that at this late stage of the session it is unnecessary to bring down a Bill of this kind. There is no doubt the savings bank was instituted in the first place for the purpose of enabling persons of small capital to save their weekly earnings, and for that purpose I think it is of great value; but this Bill is going too far, for the time we have at our disposal to consider it. I see by Clause 7 that firms may open accounts; so the Government are certainly going in the direction of a State bank, and from Clause 9 I think they may want to go a little farther and issue cheque books.

HON. M. L. MOSS : Why not ?

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE : That may or may not be right. What I say is that we have about 10 hours before we close Parliament, and we have no opportunity of discussing the financial aspect of the question and how the institution would be conducted. The time is not sufficient to go into a matter so serious as this Bill involves, and for that reason I intend to support the amendment.

HON. M. L. MOSS (West) : As one who has been obliged to watch many Government measures and who has unfortunately been obliged to oppose many proposals of the Government, I have on the present occasion much pleasure in supporting this Bill. The object of the

Bill is to popularise the savings bank. The hon. member who has just resumed his seat seems to think that presently we shall have a proposal to issue cheques.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE : I rise to a point of order. I did not say I was opposed to the measure on that account. What I said was that we had no time to consider a Bill of this kind.

HON. M. L. MOSS : If the occasion arises to farther popularise this institution by enabling cheques to be drawn on savings bank accounts, I shall be prepared to go to that extent also. It is absurd to suggest for one moment that the carrying of this small measure, comprising two or three new principles, is equivalent to the starting of a State bank; because if a proposal were made to start a State bank whereby advances could be made on overdrafts, we should have every reason to pause before we affected the credit of the country in that way. But what does this Bill contain? It wipes out a very stupid rule which exists in connection with these savings banks, that one cannot pay in a sum of less than 1s. to any account. I have never been able to understand the reason of that. The next principle is that the limit of the amount is to be raised from £600 to £1,000. The Government have the use of this money, and I believe that the rate of interest is fixed now at 3 per cent. Mr. Sholl says it is not advisable to give the Government the opportunity of using so much money; but really when we come to consider that any Government in power has almost unlimited right to issue Treasury bills to the tune of hundreds of thousands of pounds, how far does that argument go, contrasted with the small extension of principle contained in this Clause 5 of the Bill? The Government have standing Parliamentary sanction for raising Treasury bills. I hardly think we can seriously consider that the extension of this amount from £600 to £1,000 is a matter of any great moment. We know perfectly well with regard to sums of money paid in courts of law and into the Treasury in relation to contractors' deposits on contracts, and a number of other instances one could give, the Government have always many thousands of pounds of floating money, which is used, and on which there is the same rate of

interest as is given for these savings bank deposits. What is wrong in the principle of Clause 7 to enable accounts to be opened in joint names? And what is wrong with Clause 9, enabling municipal corporations, roads boards, and friendly societies to claim the advantages of the savings bank? We know perfectly well that in the majority of instances that will only be taken advantage of in cases where there is not an ordinary banking institution, as we understand it in the commercial sense. There are many places where there are branches of friendly societies or small corporations or roads boards where there will always be a savings bank, but there would not be an ordinary banking institution, and the existence of the provisions in the Bill will be an advantage to the country. Mr. Haynes has drawn attention to the charges made for keeping accounts. I know that in a bank when a man has an overdraft they charge interest, but I do not know of any bank that gives interest on an ordinary current account. The amount charged by these banks for keeping an account in credit is to my mind exorbitant. With regard to banks carrying on business in this State, the figures run into a very large amount. The object of establishing the savings bank was probably in the first instance that the banks should rid themselves of a number of these small accounts. The banks have combined, and there is no going next door and avoiding payment of the impost for keeping accounts in credit. I do not think that the principles at stake are so serious in this Bill that even the shortness of the session should stand in the way of our agreeing to it.

Hon. J. W. LANGSFORD (Metropolitan-Suburban): The Minister, in moving the second reading, did not tell us how many depositors had reached the limit of £600. It would be useful to the Committee if we had discovered a big demand amongst savings bank customers for this increase. It is, as Mr. Loton has said, an endeavour to introduce the first step of a State bank, and it is going away altogether from our idea of a popular savings bank. As I opposed the extension in regard to benefit societies operating in the field of life insurance companies, I think, until we have properly discussed the matter in this House,

I shall oppose the entering of this bank into the field of banking institutions. Clause 4 is, I think, a bad clause. If any depositor has 11d. saved he can easily wait until he has 1s. If he has 1s. 11d. saved he can easily wait until he has 2s. This will save a great amount of work in the savings bank. There are many other societies that refuse to take anything less than £1. In Clause 9 there are some features that I think are good. I shall be opposed to municipal corporations dealing with the savings bank, for I do not know of any municipality in the State where there is not an ordinary bank; but I shall be in favour of including friendly societies, trades unions, associations, societies, or clubs dealing with the bank. I was under the impression that their accounts were too small for ordinary banks to trouble with. In this case they would receive interest, whereas in the ordinary bank they would not. That is the only satisfactory feature I can see in the Bill.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (in reply): I am surprised at the general opposition to this little measure. I can assure members it is simply introduced in response to the demands of the public. There has been a certain amount of agitation in various quarters in connection with the matter; and I fail to see that, if a depositor wishes to increase his deposit from £150 to £300, Parliament should say he should not do so. It is said there is no present need for this measure; but the experience of the savings bank is that they have had to refuse a large amount of money owing to the limit fixed by the law. There is a limit if this Bill be passed, because a depositor will not be allowed to deposit any amount, but will be restricted to £1,000. So I think members should take into consideration that the action of the Government in this measure is no tendency in the direction of socialism, and that the measure is simply an enlargement of a principle adopted many years ago when the State was much more conservative than it is at present. It is an extension of a principle accepted as far back as 1893, and indeed very much earlier. Now that the colony has progressed so much, and when there is need of an amendment, and when there are people who wish to put money into the

savings bank, and when we have to refuse it, why this Chamber should oppose a measure of this description, simply extending an individual's deposits from £150 to £300 in a year, and to £1,000 altogether, I am totally at a loss to understand. The Post Office Savings Bank funds have been a valuable help to the country. They have been useful to many in the past, though I hope it will not be necessary for the present Government to use them in the future. What do we use the funds for now? Largely to help in the repurchase of estates, very often at high figures, but always at a profit to the State. I think every inducement should be given to the people of the State to lodge their money in what is practically a State bank. One may call it by some other name, but that is what it is practically, and that is what it will practically remain under this Bill. Every inducement should be given to people to do this. In recent years private banks have insisted on a charge of one guinea a year for keeping accounts, which has resulted in many people withdrawing their accounts from private banks. I know of numerous instances, and my opinion is that there should be no limit. However, the limit is £1,000 in this Bill, and if people wish to deposit up to £1,000, I fail to see why there should be any restriction. Some statistics were asked for by Mr. Langsford. At the end of August, 1904, there were 57,363 accounts averaging £36 2s. 8d. per depositor. Of course, there may be numerous instances of deposits up to £600; but there are many instances of deposits up to £2 or less. Children often deposit money in the savings bank. I am sure that in several cases the bank has had to refuse money. The total amount in the bank on that date mentioned was £2,720,757.

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

Ayes	...	...	...	8
Noes	...	...	...	7

Majority for ... 1

AYES.	NOES.
Hon. H. Briggs	Hon. J. M. Drew
Hon. T. F. O. Brimage	Hon. V. Hamersley
Hon. C. E. Dempster	Hon. R. Laurie
Hon. S. J. Haynes	Hon. B. D. McKenzie
Hon. J. W. Langsford	Hon. M. L. Moss
Hon. W. T. Loton	Hon. C. Sommers
Hon. G. Randall	Hon. J. D. Connolly
Hon. E. F. Sholl (Teller).	(Teller).

Amendment thus passed, the Bill deferred for six months.

BRANDS BILL.

SECOND READING.

Resumed from the 20th December.

Hon. R. F. SHOLL (North): I do not desire to say much on this Bill. I have been informed that there are many useful clauses in it; but it is a pity that it did not come forward earlier so that one could study it more. There are amendments which I would have moved had we had more time; but now I do not propose to interfere with the Bill, because I think it is called for, so far as I can gather from the settlers interested. The time has come when a Brands Bill should be introduced to prevent duffing, which is practically stealing cattle and removing earmarks, and to bring brands up to date. I have marked several amendments, but I do not propose to move them. There is one amendment I believe to which no exception will be taken, and that refers to Clause 45. It is stated that no cattle under the age of two years and no horse under one year shall be deemed unbranded. I am informed, and from what I know myself it is so, that one year is too low for a colt to be deemed unbranded. The gelding and the branding are done at the same time. The gelding cannot be done until the horse is one year of age; therefore Clause 45 could be amended without jeopardising the Bill, and I suggest 18 months instead of one year for a colt, and 18 months instead of two years in the case of cattle. The reason is that cattle can be unscored in almost six months or a little over. I think anyone who will allow bulls of two years of age to run through their runs deserves to lose them. There is one clause as to travelling stock. I have been told that there will be no objection to amend this Bill next session if it is proved to be unworkable. When the Bill is in force little matters will crop up and prove themselves, and then we can get them amended. As to travelling stock I think there is a danger, and I speak particularly as to the far-away North stations at Kimberley where they travel stock overland. The stock pass through long dry stages of country, and often some stray away or are left behind from sore-

footedness. Under the Bill sufficient time is not given to enable the owner to make arrangements for the protection of these cattle. A drover may be 200 or 300 miles inland and pass through a station, and either through neglect or force of circumstances one quarter of the stock may scatter over the country. It may probably be a couple of months before the owner is made aware of the fact that his cattle have been left behind. I do not pretend to deal with this matter at the present time, but I think it may be amended next session. The Bill is a good one, and rather than jeopardise it, as it has been thoroughly threshed out in two sessions, I think we may pass it. I do not propose to move any amendment, except the one in Clause 45 to alter the age of cattle to 18 months and horses to 18 months also. Sir Edward Wittenoom is unfortunately away to-day, and I had to take this matter up at the last moment.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY (East): I would like to state that I regret the absence of Sir Edward Wittenoom, because we relied on him as a member who is well acquainted with the northern districts of the country to which the Bill particularly applies. I have noticed several points that will require very careful consideration at the hands of members, and I hope therefore we shall not hurry the measure through. It seems to me that in Clause 35 there is very great danger. We are putting a great deal of power in the hands of the cattle "duffer." According to Clause 35, any person who requires to go into a man's paddock can remove 500 sheep, or a few head of cattle or horses, and take the stock to a yard 30 or 40 miles inland. The only notice given is to post a notice on the yard that the stock have been impounded, and then to advise a justice of the peace, who may be working with the man, and the justice may order the advertising of the stock in any newspaper. It is impossible within the time given in the Bill, 12 days, for the owner to see the advertisement. The person has the power to have all the stock sold without any recognised auctioneer, for anyone can be appointed to sell stock. I think Clauses 56 and 36 require close inspection. And we might alter Clause 38. I am very pleased to indorse the remarks made by Mr. Sholl as to Clause

45, and I hope in Committee these points will receive close attention at the hands of members. I shall be pleased to see the Bill passed into law if it is not too late in the session.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (in reply): I do not wish to delay the House. I desire to state that I agree with most of the objections raised by members. If the Bill had been submitted to me previously some of the amendments would have been made, as they seem necessary. I undertake, if the Bill is passed this session, that an amendment shall be brought forward next session. No doubt if the Bill is passed, amendments must be made, but there is not sufficient time to deal with amendments now.

HON. M. L. MOSS: Why pass the Bill this session?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Because the Bill contains so many valuable clauses, and the amendments suggested deal with minor matters, it is in the best interests of the country that we should pass the Bill, and if dangerous clauses are discovered they can be amended. I do not think it is desirable that minor amendments should be made which might endanger the passage of the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clauses 1 to 5—agreed to.

Clause 6—Description of brands:

HON. C. E. DEMPSTER: With respect to pitch branding of sheep, at present an owner might have one brand for sheep and cattle, which would be too large to brand on a sheep's face. A pitch brand might be used, and provision should be made for placing that brand on the back of the sheep.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Any member who wished to make suggestions should do so, so that they might be recorded in *Hansard* and be available to the Government subsequently.

Clause passed.

Clauses 7, 8—agreed to.

Clause 9—Size of brand:

HON. C. E. DEMPSTER: The clause provided that every brand used for horses and cattle should be not less than 1½ inches in length. Sir Edward Wittenoom thought that the brand should be not

less than 1½ inches and not more than 3 inches.

Clause passed.

Clauses 10 to 34—agreed to.

Clause 35—Duties of persons impounding stock in a private yard:

HON. V. HAMERSLEY: The impounder had to furnish a written description to a justice. By collusion, a justice might order a sale without posting notices in conspicuous places. The stock could then be sold within 12 days. The time should be extended to 21 days.

HON. R. F. SHOLL: Mr. Hamersley's suggestion would not work in localities several hundred miles from the coast, where it would be impossible to notify a justice within 48 hours. Better pass the clause, and amend it next session.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 36—Access to be afforded to stock impounded in private enclosures:

HON. C. E. DEMPSTER: The provisions for stock in public pounds did not apply here. The private impounder could give notice to the nearest justice, affix a notice at the stockyard, and the stock might in 12 days be sold by the justice's order, without any proper attempt to notify the owner, who was not sufficiently safeguarded. The clause should be amended next session.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 37 to 44—agreed to.

Clause 45—Unbranded cattle:

HON. R. F. SHOLL moved an amendment:

That the words "two years," in line 1, be struck out, and "eighteen months" be inserted in lieu; and that "one year," in line 2, be struck out, and "eighteen months" be inserted.

Both horses and cattle were generally branded and gelded at the same time.

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

Clauses 46 to end—agreed to.

Schedules 1, 2—agreed to.

Schedule 3—Application for brand for horses and cattle:

HON. R. F. SHOLL moved an amendment:

That the words "ten shillings" be struck out, and "seven shillings and sixpence" be inserted in lieu.

This was consequential on an amendment of a clause.

Amendment passed, and the schedule as amended agreed to.

Schedules 4, 5, 6—agreed to.

Schedule 7—Position and order of brands for horses and cattle:

HON. R. F. SHOLL moved an amendment:

That the words "or off cheek" be inserted after "off rump."

Amendment passed, and schedule as amended agreed to.

Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments, and the report adopted.

THIRD READING.

Bill read a third time, and returned to the Legislative Assembly with amendments.

LOAN BILL, £750,000.

ALL STAGES.

Received from the Legislative Assembly, and read a first time.

At five minutes past 6 o'clock, the PRESIDENT left the Chair.

At 7.40, Chair resumed.

SECOND READING.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. J. M. Drew), in moving the second reading, said: This is a Bill to authorise the raising of a sum of £750,000 by loan, for the construction of certain public works and for other purposes. The money is required to carry out certain works partly undertaken or authorised by the previous Government, and other works which the present Government intend to carry out. I am sure members of this House will not expect from me, under the peculiar circumstances of my position here, a full explanation of every item which appears in the schedule of the Bill. Members will find, from the details of the Loan Estimates on page 9, a full explanation of every item; and I am sure every member of this House who has had an opportunity to peruse that document will not require from me a detailed explanation in connection with the items in this schedule. In regard to the first item under the head of railways, it has been rendered necessary that an amount of £103,000 should be placed in the schedule for additions and improvements to opened

railways. According to reports received from the Railway Department, a large amount of expenditure is needed in order to put some portions of the railway system into proper order; and the Government, after careful investigation, have deemed it advisable to place this amount in the schedule. "Jandakot Railway, £23,000"—this line was authorised by a previous Government, and the sanction for its construction was given by Parliament last year. It is the intention of the Government to carry out the work and respect the wishes of Parliament. [MEMBER: When?] At a very early date, before next session I trust; at any rate within the next few months. I may say we have no intention to delay the work. "Malcolm-Laverton Railway, £23,000," also "Rolling-stock, £141,000"—these items are considered necessary. "Survey of New Lines, £7,800"—it is necessary that this amount should be placed at the disposal of Parliament, because it may be necessary to survey new lines of railway, or lines at any rate which may be proposed to Parliament for construction at a later date.

HON. R. F. SHOLL: What lines are they?

THE MINISTER: That question may crop up later.

HON. R. F. SHOLL: You may as well tell us.

THE MINISTER: As a matter of fact, we do not know ourselves at present; we want time to consider. "Albany Harbour Works, £4,200"—there has been a local agitation for the improvement of Albany Harbour; and the Government have decided to place this amount in the schedule.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: The Collie-Narrogin Railway I thought was to be undertaken?

THE MINISTER: It is the intention of the Government to undertake it.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Where is it?

THE MINISTER: It should be here. I think it is on page 10 of the Loan Estimates, £82,500. "Boring for Water, along stock routes, etc., £10,000"—this I think is a very necessary work; for there are many stock routes, particularly in the North-West portion of the State and the pastoral districts, on which there is not sufficient water. It is the intention

of the Government to bore for water in various parts in order to help the pastoral lessees, who have not received that amount of consideration for some years past which it is felt is their due. It is the intention of the Government, while conserving every other industry, also to help the pastoral industry. On the Eastern Goldfields it is proposed to expend £41,000 for the development of goldfield and mineral resources. I regret that as regards the Murchison and Peak Hill Goldfields there is only £7,000 on the schedule. The schedule provides for the Pilbarra Goldfields £1,000, for other Goldfields (including boring for coal and miscellaneous) £2,000, for Development of Mining £7,200, for Erection of State Batteries £10,000, an item which, if judiciously expended, will be very advantageous. For Agricultural Immigration £10,000 is provided; and in regard to immigration it is the intention of the Government to send lecturers to the Eastern States and to England in order to advertise the agricultural industry of this State. For many weeks past, according to the records of the Lands Department—of course this is only approximate—there have been on an average 220 selectors a month from the Eastern States, and 75 per cent. of these visitors have selected land in this State.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Mostly on the Great Southern.

THE MINISTER: Mostly on the Great Southern. The figures give an average of about 50 per week, and this number represents about 100 persons. They come here representing a number of persons besides themselves—their families and friends. I am only sorry the amount for immigration is not more, to develop the splendid agricultural country we have, for we could absorb a very large number of people. As regards rabbit fencing, £150,000, it is regrettable indeed that this item should appear, but it is unavoidable. Some members may say the item should not appear in a Loan Bill; but this work is an attempt to preserve the assets of the State.

HON. M. L. MOSS: Are you sure you are not going to fence the rabbits in, instead of fencing them out?

THE MINISTER: We are not responsible for starting the fence. We intend

to carry out the intentions of the previous Government, and the justification for the item appearing in the Loan Bill is that we are endeavouring to protect the assets of the State.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Have you a plan to place on the table?

THE MINISTER: No; but I have one at the office, and if it is wished I will bring it here. I beg to move the second reading of the Bill, and I hope members will not deal too harshly with it.

HON. R. F. SHOLL (North): I have been a long time out of politics, and perhaps I may be a little adrift, but I never saw a Loan Bill come down like this without any information whatever—I mean information concerning details. Take the railways, for instance—“Additions and Improvements to opened railways, £103,000:” if I remember rightly, when railway additions are made, a Bill should be brought down; otherwise we may have the continuation of a railway without any Bill authorising the construction of that work. We have been told that money for improvements to opened railways may be for rolling-stock. It may be for extra expenditure on a line to goodness knows where. It ought to be brought down in a separate Bill. If it is to provide rolling-stock, that is absolutely wrong, misleading, and dishonest, because we are told our railways are paying so much on their construction, so much for providing a sinking fund and interest, and so much in addition. My contention is that when a railway is built, it should be properly equipped out of the amount voted for railway construction and equipment, and after that it should be kept in order in rolling-stock and improvements or repairs out of revenue derived from that railway. That is why I complain that we have no information with regard to details.

THE MINISTER: Pages 8 and 9.

HON. R. F. SHOLL: Yes; I cannot go into the particulars now. It would have been just as well if the matter had been brought before us earlier, so that we might have discussed these things. With regard to the Jandakot Railway, I believe the Government intend to extend that line only to Jandakot. If so, I

am informed—and I have good reason to believe it—that will be money thrown away. The area is a very good agricultural one so far as growing vegetables is concerned, but it will hardly pay the country to expend £24,150 to bring vegetables to Fremantle. If the line be extended to the South-Western Railway, so as to bring timber and produce, it will pay; but if it is going to end at Jandakot, I believe it is not justified. I claim we have not the information in this Bill which is desired. To have a measure involving an expenditure of £750,000 brought down near the end of the session is, in my opinion, unfair to the House. It is unfair to the House to expect us to pass a large sum of money like this, without having an opportunity of going through the details and studying them. We are perfectly unworthy of our trust as a House of revision if we pass measures like this, and if we allow ourselves to be made tools of we are unworthy of the position we occupy. If we are a House of revision, we ought really to protect the interests of the country by saying we must have the information before passing this measure. I am only a young member so far as this House is concerned, but I had considerable experience in the Legislative Assembly some years back, under the present form of government and under the old system of government by the Legislative Council, before the introduction of responsible government. In the old days, when I was in the Lower House, these Estimates would never have been passed on this meagre information.

HON. G. RANDELL (Metropolitan): I think the return showing probable state, on the 30th June, 1905, of the works constructed from the general loan fund, anticipated progress in the works etc., gives the information desired. It is not usual to have it in a Loan Bill.

HON. J. W. LANGSFORD (Metropolitan-Suburban): There is one item here which I think the House may express an opinion upon, that of agricultural immigration. I gather it is intended to spend £8,000 in an invasion of the Eastern States, to attract from those States their best settlers. I very much doubt whether at this juncture it will tend to cultivate the federal spirit

which I am sure this House wishes to cultivate.

HON. J. D. CONNOLLY: It wants cultivating.

HON. J. W. LANGSFORD: I doubt very much whether this is the best method of achieving that result. If we have any cause of complaint it is against the Federal Parliament, and not against the State Parliaments or the people of the other States whom this will affect more than it will the Federal Parliament.

HON. J. D. CONNOLLY: The people elect the Federal Parliament.

HON. J. W. LANGSFORD: The material gain we are likely to have by this will not for one moment weigh in value with the unfriendly and unfederal spirit it is likely to engender; and what need is there at this time? The Minister has informed us that selectors are already coming from the Eastern States at the rate of 50 per week. The population is increasing from 15,000 to 20,000 per year. What need have we for this attempt to increase the population on these lines at so rapid a rate? I object most strongly, because it is a most unfriendly spirit to show. I may be a bit thin-skinned on the matter; but I think the result will be to show a very unfriendly and unfederal spirit.

HON. W. T. LOTON: I must say at this late stage that I regret the Minister did not attempt to give us more information. Mr. Sholl's remarks were very pertinent on this point. Take the first item, Additions and Improvements to Opened Railways. There is no information shown.

THE MINISTER: The detailed information is shown in the schedule.

HON. W. T. LOTON: There is no information as to the items on which the money is to be spent. The lump sum is given, and the person in charge of the work can do as he likes. I agree with Mr. Sholl that the information is most meagre—practically nothing at all. We vote a lump sum in the dark, and the Government do what they like with it. I would like to know where the rolling-stock is to be placed. We have not been building any new lines lately, and they are supposed to be well equipped. Has the money been expended? We are told that the dining cars are now running, but we have not sufficient information. The

money is handed over to the Commissioner of Railways, and he can do what he likes with it. Whatever Government is in power, when these railways are constructed provision should be made for their proper equipment. It is no good constructing a railway unless we have the rolling-stock, and it is no use burking the question to say that the line will cost so much, and when the line is made to find that we have not got sufficient rolling-stock, and that we must ask for another loan. That is bad generalship. If the original amount for the construction of the line is not sufficient, let us provide the full amount; for then we can ascertain whether the railways are paying or not. We have these extra sums to pay for opened lines. The money ought to be paid out of revenue. We are considerably piling up the cost of our railways. We say on the one hand that they are paying interest and working expenses and sinking fund, and on the other hand we borrow money to keep them going. Can the Minister tell us what new lines it is proposed to survey? I see the first item on the schedule is the Coolgardie-Esperance survey. If I had an opportunity of voting on this question I should distinctly vote against it.

HON. R. D. MCKENZIE: The line will come whether you vote against it or not.

HON. W. T. LOTON: It may come in time, but not at present. Why spend money on the survey of it? There are more lines which would be of advantage to the State to deal with before dealing with this question.

HON. J. D. CONNOLLY: That is a matter of opinion.

HON. W. T. LOTON: It is my opinion. Western Australia is not in a position to build a line of railway for the benefit of a sister State. It would be no use to us; and the people of the goldfields know it. It would practically be money thrown away. This shows the necessity of having fuller information before us earlier. If I got a seconder, I would send a suggestion down to another place on some of these questions; and if another place was not prepared to agree, I would be prepared to go farther and strike out the measure altogether. That is my feeling on the system of sending down statements at the last moment. We do not get the oppor-

tunity of making a suggestion on these matters except by speaking in the House when the Bill must be passed. If the session is to close to-morrow morning we might as well save our breath and let the other people take the responsibility ; but I say again it is particularly unsatisfactory having no information. I regret to say that it is not the intention of the Government to push forward the water supply and sewerage scheme for Perth. If the Government do not intend to do anything, the various councils will have to take some steps very soon. We are wasting money over the present system. The cost of the sanitary service now is more than the whole scheme for water supply and sewerage would amount to. The health of the citizens should be considered. I am rather glad to find the Government are satisfied that the State is solvent enough to enable them to go to the markets of the world to raise money for the development of certain industries, and that these industries are not to be developed out of revenue. The Premier has evidently changed his opinion since he made his speech at Subiaco six months ago. I am pleased to see that change of opinion. I suppose at the time the Premier made his speech he had not had an opportunity of going into the whole position of affairs. Still I am pleased that he has sufficient confidence in the State to raise a certain amount of money for the development of the industries of the State beyond what can be spent out of revenue. Last year the Council expressed an opinion that such works as the Jandakot Railway and the Malcolm to Laverton Railway should not be built out of revenue. I am glad it has been found that we adopted the proper course. We pointed out to the Government at that time that it would be found impossible to complete these works out of revenue. This statement has proved to be true. The hands of the Government have been forced and they now find it necessary to go to the money market. I do not intend to oppose the Bill ; in fact I should be glad if the Government had gone farther. I am satisfied that there will be no trouble in raising the money and at a reasonable rate of interest.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Power to raise money for certain purposes :

HON. R. F. SHOLL moved that the clause be postponed until after the consideration of the schedule, for it might be necessary to send suggestions down to the Assembly.

Motion passed, the clause postponed.

Clauses 3 to 7—agreed to.

First Schedule :

HON. R. F. SHOLL asked for information as to the item, "Additions and Improvements to Opened Railways."

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Particulars were set forth in detail on the Loan Estimates. He was surprised at the opposition shown. He had carefully gone through *Hansard* for years past, and the longest speech delivered by any Minister of the Crown when introducing a Loan Bill did not exceed $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches. This year the Government had produced a document giving an explanation of the principal items in the Bill ; still he was attacked because the Government did not supply sufficient information to members. Was it expected that he should be a walking encyclopædia ? The majority of members were reasonable, and would not expect him to furnish information as to every detail in the Bill. If necessary, he would adjourn the farther consideration of the measure to supply members with information ; but it could not be expected that he could give information outside his own department, without having an opportunity of consulting his colleagues.

HON. R. F. SHOLL: There was no attack on the Minister ; but he (Mr. Sholl) blamed those who were responsible for not supplying information in regard to important public works. We were not supplied with sufficient details. Although the Bill had passed another place, it was for members of this Chamber to go into the matters and criticise them if necessary. Imagine borrowing money for building a roof in the space between the new verandah and the refreshment room verandah at the railway station, Kalgoorlie, and for station-masters' houses, Leederville, roadway and steps Congdon street station, and so forth. Those were not works for which money should be borrowed. All additions to railways and

works should be paid for out of revenue. It was a perfect and ridiculous farce to ask members to borrow money for these purposes. He entered his protest against the way in which the items on the Loan Bill were submitted to members. On future occasions he would get members, although it was hopeless now, to make suggestions or throw the Bill out altogether.

HON. J. W. LANGSFORD: The item "Agricultural Immigration, £10,000," concerned the Minister's own department. What were the intentions of the Government in regard to the proposed invasion of the Eastern States to obtain agricultural labourers?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: It was the intention of the Government to send lecturers to England and to the Eastern States, and owing to the splendid Federal feeling which existed there could be no objection to obtaining settlers from any portion of the Commonwealth. Before doing this the Government would probably appoint an advisory board to give counsel in that direction. It was the intention of the Government before any steps were taken to consult various gentlemen in the community who, from their experience, were qualified to give the Government sound advice. We knew that the introduction of an agricultural population to Western Australia would develop the resources of the State and would add to the prosperity of the country. It was the intention of the Government to do what they possibly could to introduce a sound population. We did not desire to introduce paupers or people seeking work, but to obtain a population who would become producers. Any money expended in this direction would be spent judiciously. The Government did not guarantee that the whole of the funds voted would be expended, but if it was necessary in the interests of the State to expend the money, it would be expended.

Schedule put and passed.

Second and Third Schedules—agreed to.

Postponed Clause 2—agreed to.

Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Read a third time, and passed.

At 8:44, the **PRESIDENT** left the Chair, awaiting Messages from the Legislative Assembly.

At 9:40, Chair resumed.

APPROPRIATION BILL.

ALL STAGES.

Received from the Legislative Assembly, and read a first time.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. J. M. Drew), in moving the second reading, said: I hope hon. members will not require me to give explicit explanation in regard to every item in the Estimates which are comprised in this Bill; otherwise the session of Parliament is likely to be prolonged. I take the opportunity of saying something in reference to my own department (Lands), which I understand is a subject interesting to a large number of members in this Chamber. There has been a great deal of criticism in the Press and elsewhere in regard to the Lands Department. It has been a complaint that we are asking for £35,000 more than was voted last year. It is my desire to justify that increase in the expenditure. What have been the causes of this increase? It is the joint effect of our liberal land laws and the increase of settlement. All the conditional purchase areas are now surveyed free of charge; and in regard to grazing leases, the persons taking them up are asked to pay only for the survey fees; consequently the more selection of land there is in the course of a year, the more expenditure is demanded for carrying on the work of the Lands Department. Last year, the vote asked for in connection with land surveys was only £22,000, but a total of £33,772 was expended in the year. This year we require £50,000, and that amount is necessary owing to the great expansion in land settlement. In addition to the cost of surveys (defrayed by the department) rendered necessary by the increase of land selection, there are expenses also in connection with the dealing with applications, because more men are required to deal with the applications when there is an increase in the settlement of land than if there were no increase. Then the applications have to be examined, and there must be an increase in the examiners; also the applications must be checked, and there must consequently be an

increase for checking. Also as to the preparing of leases, if there are a larger number of leases in one year than in the preceding year, then of course the staff must be increased. The inspection and classification also form a very important item, for if there is a considerable augmentation in the direction of land settlement, there must be a considerable augmentation in the expenditure for inspection and classification. We have to send out inspectors who must inspect and report, and then there must be classification, and all these things mean expenditure. Hence the more land selection there is in the course of a year, the more expenditure must be incurred by the department in keeping up with the work. During the last three years there has been an enormous increase in land settlement. In 1901-2, the number of applications received was nearly 1,868, and in 1903-4 there were 5,585 applications received, representing over 37,000 acres. Thus, in the space of three years the selection has increased by 300 per cent.; so it must be admitted that there is some justification for the increased amount which is required for the administration of this department. This increase is likely to go on. The time may come when the expenditure for the Lands Department will be much in excess of the income from that department; but I contend that it will be a good thing for the State when that condition is reached; for though there may be perhaps a direct loss on the working of the department, yet there will certainly be an indirect gain, because we shall have settlement in the country of a permanent population, which will tend to advance the prosperity of the whole of the State. At the present time, the prospects of land settlement are most encouraging. We have coming to this State a large number of people from the Eastern States, on the average 50 selectors a week, who represent about 100 people as permanent settlers. These 50 selectors coming in a week represent at least 50 more who are awaiting their reports as to the prospects of the land here; and if the reports are satisfactory, we may expect that all the friends of those settlers to whom they report and who are anxious to come here if the prospects are satisfactory will take steps to come here.

HON. R. F. SHOLL: You will have the whole of the Commonwealth here, then!

THE MINISTER: It may be a misfortune, but we shall be glad to fix up the situation accordingly. I have visited several of the new settlers, who express themselves as perfectly satisfied with the land and the prospects; and I am sure that if sufficient encouragement is given to them, and the Government will take steps to develop the agricultural areas by making new lines to suit the convenience of settlers, there will be a permanent and useful population settled in the State. In these Estimates provision is made for the payment of land guides, and on this point I may explain that hitherto the system has been that land guides were paid so much a head for taking round any intending settlers; and it would be astonishing to members in this House if a return were presented, showing the amounts which some of these land guides have received under this system. It appears that some of the land guides have been drawing considerably more money per year than members of the Ministry receive as salary, and in some instances the guides have been receiving as much as a Supreme Court Judge. When I came into office, I decided to put an end to the system of paying at per head, and instead of paying in that way I arranged that the land guides should be paid a salary for the work they were required to do. The result is that instead of paying something like £5,000 a year as a total for this kind of service, we will spend under the new system only some £2,200, and we shall get a more effective service. Also in regard to free passes by railway to intending selectors, this system has been grossly abused. Almost every deadhead in the community who wanted to travel from one place to another by railway was an intending land selector. In some instances business people have been taking unfair advantage of the system, for they found that all they had to do was to go to the Lands Department, make a declaration that they were looking for land on which to settle, and they got a free pass to some portion of the State to which they wanted to go. There was a police court prosecution in one instance, in which the man got a free pass to Albany, and afterwards sold it for 5s. That man was convicted of the charge, and got a month's imprison-

ment. The system was so grossly abused that I was forced to put an end to it; and the provision I made was that the free-pass system should not be altogether abolished, but if a person desired to select land he should first make known his intention to the nearest land office that he wanted to select land, and if his deposit in connection with the land selected was 50 per cent. in excess of the amount of his railway fare, the department would refund him the amount of his fare. For instance, if the railway fare of an intending selector was £5, and he paid £7 10s. as a deposit for the land selected, the department would refund him the £5 he had paid for his fare. That was the only system I could devise to prevent this abuse. In connection with the rabbit-proof fence, I have dealt with that previously, and I find that there is a necessity to spend something like £100,000 on the rabbit-proof fence. [MEMBER: Which line of fence is that?] The second line is about to be constructed; but as to whether the lines are parallel I cannot say. If there are any questions which members wish to ask in connection with other departments dealt with in the Estimates accompanying this Bill, I will answer them as well as I am able, or if not able to answer them, and hon. members wish for more information, we can adjourn this Bill till to-morrow, because I do not like to see hon. members dissatisfied in regard to information they require. I move that the Bill now be read a second time.

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.

Read a third time, and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

On motion by the MINISTER, resolved that the House at its rising do adjourn till 11 o'clock of the next forenoon.

THE MINISTER informed members that the House would also meet at 2:30 o'clock in the afternoon, and the prorogation would take place at 3.

The House adjourned at 10 o'clock, until the next forenoon.

Legislative Assembly, Friday, 23rd December, 1904.

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MR. SPEAKER took the Chair at 10:30 o'clock, forenoon.

PRAYERS.

QUESTION—CROWN GRANT, COTTESLOE.

MR. RASON (for Mr. Foulkes) asked the Premier: 1, Did the Cottesloe Road Board send, on 12th November last, a protest to the Minister for Lands or the Premier against the proposed grant by the Crown of a piece of land situate in Railway Street, Cottesloe, numbered lot 163? 2, Why did the Government ignore such protest? 3, Will the Government in future consult the local authorities before making any more grants of land in the Cottesloe district?

THE PREMIER replied: I have received no protest, and I am inquiring from the Lands Office in reference to the matter.

QUESTION—STATE BATTERIES, DUPLICATE PARTS.

MR. HENSHAW asked the Minister for Mines: 1, Where are the Government obtaining duplicate parts for State batteries, such as liner plates, shoes, dies, cams, bearings, etc., necessitated by wear and tear? 2, The extent of present stocks, when and where obtained?