

nection with the expenditure in this direction, due largely to the fact that the Stores Department had been amalgamated, and was now under the Government Storekeeper instead of being under different departmental stores. The total saving was £2,537 since 1905. There was £11,326 expended in 1905; last year the expenditure was £8,789. The total decrease compared with last year was £618. There was exceptional expenditure during the present year, but it was anticipated by the Stores Manager there would be considerable reductions effected. It was a matter to which he (the Premier) would give attention, to see whether it was possible with more careful supervision for further reductions to be made. As a matter of fact, the Tender Board consisted of officers of the various departments, who received no fee for the services rendered by them on the board.

Mr. GEORGE: There was a reduction of £2,455 in this item, but there was another item, "Storemen and packers, £1,475," which was new.

Mr. ANGWIN: The storemen and packers were included among the clerks last year.

Item, Incidental, £1,000:

Mr. ANGWIN: What rent was paid for the Perth premises?

The PREMIER could not supply that information.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*Indenting Office*, £1,636:

Mr. KEENAN: Was this money expended in London?

The PREMIER: Yes. It was really not a charge to revenue, inasmuch as the inspection costs were debited to the particular works. The estimated revenue was £1,636, as explained in a footnote.

Mr. GEORGE: Was the inspecting engineer doing the work previously carried on by a Mr. Carruthers, to whom many thousands of pounds were paid for commission?

The Minister for Works: That is so.

Mr. GEORGE: Was the passing of material entirely satisfactory to those who had to use it in the State?

The PREMIER: Mr. Salter was the present officer; Mr. Palmer preceded him.

Mr. Palmer's salary was £900, and his retiring allowance appeared in last year's Estimates. It was understood the work was being carried out satisfactorily.

Vote put and passed.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.27 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 16th November, 1909.

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: 1, Roads Act, 1902—By-laws of Upper Blackwood roads board. 2, Fremantle Harbour Trust regulations. 3, Plans of the following proposed railways: (a) Dowerin-Merredin. (b) Boyup-Kojonup, (c) Goomalling-Wongan Hills.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1. Land Act Special Lease, returned to the Legislative Assembly with an amendment.

2. Municipal Corporations Act Amendment, transmitted to the Legislative Assembly.

BILL — METROPOLITAN WATER SUPPLY, SEWERAGE, AND DRAINAGE.

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. D. Connolly), in moving the second

reading, said: The measure is one providing machinery for carrying out the water and sewerage system of this State so far as the metropolitan area is concerned. It takes the place of the Act of 1904, which was proclaimed early last year, and the purpose of the Bill is to put the work of the management and control of the water and sewerage of the metropolitan area on a sound business-like footing. It is also an amending and consolidating measure. It amends the Act of 1904, and there are several small Acts in force relating to water supply for the metropolitan area which it consolidates. It is estimated that the total cost for the storm water and drainage when the work now on hand is completed for the metropolitan area, including the cost of waterworks in Perth, Fremantle, and Claremont, will be close upon one million pounds. It is certain, however, that the expenditure will be greatly increased as time goes on and the population in the metropolitan area becomes greater. As I have before stated, this Bill will take the place of the existing Act of 1904, which was passed so far back as the latter end of 1903, but was only proclaimed at the beginning of this year, the explanation for that being as follows:—When the Bill was passed in the latter end of 1903 a promise was made to the then Government that the Act should not come into force—at all events the administrative sections—until it had been considered further by Parliament and if necessary amended. I cannot quite conceive—I must confess I was a member at the time—why the House should pass a Bill practically without discussion on a promise that it should not come into force, or pass a measure that would not come into force until further considered. I can only attribute it to the persuasive powers of my friend Mr. Kingsmill, who was in charge of the Bill at the time. Anyhow the Act remained in abeyance until 1907. In that year a small amendment was brought in which passed the Legislative Assembly but did not reach this Chamber. Last year a temporary amending measure to be in force for one year only and containing the machinery

clauses of the 1904 Act, so far as sewerage matters were concerned, was passed in another place and reached this House but a few days before prorogation, and it was thought sufficient time was not allowed this Chamber for proper discussion of the Bill, therefore members refused to consider it at that stage of the session and it was rejected. Without that temporary measure it was almost impossible, indeed quite impossible, to continue the sewerage work in course of construction. Up to that time work had been done under the powers contained in the Public Works Act of 1902. Those powers were right so far as the construction of mains was concerned, but when it came to the question of constructing the reticulating mains it was ascertained that the Act did not contain sufficient powers. There are two main powers in that Act; firstly, that the Government can enter on land and carry out public works with the consent of the owner, and, secondly, that the Government can do so by resumption. To obtain the consent of the owner is almost impossible for one of these reticulating mains may go through quite a number of properties, and while the consent of one or more owners, or even a majority of owners, may be obtained, one refusal would be sufficient to prevent the main from being constructed. With regard to the power of resumption, it would be far too costly a means of exercising power in connection with the construction of reticulating mains for a sewerage system; therefore it was quite impossible to proceed any further under the existing powers. The next question to consider was whether the entire work should be stopped—that is the sewerage work—or whether the Act of 1904 should be proclaimed. After a deal of consideration in the early part of last year the Government decided to proclaim the Act of 1904 in order to allow them to continue the work rather than practically to stop all work and wait until the Bill now before the House was passed. A promise was given that this Bill should be brought in as soon as possible. That is the reason why it is now before the House. The measure is also introduced

with a view of giving members an opportunity of amending, if they so desire, some very important provisions contained in the Act of 1904. The Bill I am now introducing contains a good many provisions in common with the Act of 1904, but at the same time there are some very important alterations. Some of the provisions in the 1904 Act were considered too drastic, and are omitted from this measure. Part I. of the Bill deals with the date of proclamation, it being provided that the measure shall come into force not later than May 1st next. It also deals with Acts repealed and enacts that all things done under repealed Acts shall continue in force, refers to rate-books, rates payable, penalties, contracts, etcetera, and deals with definitions, as set forth in pages 3, 4, and 5. Part II. of the Bill is rather important and deals with areas and districts. It creates a metropolitan area and provides for the division of that area into districts for water supply and sewerage, and also for storm water, as the Governor may provide. The map on the wall will show hon. members the division of the metropolitan area into four districts, namely, Guildford, Perth, Claremont and Fremantle. These are to be the water and sewerage districts. The storm water area will be proclaimed within these districts from time to time as the Governor sees fit. Under the present Act only one district is provided for, and therefore only one rate can be struck for the whole area. This would be found to be extremely unfair to some districts, more particularly to Fremantle and Claremont, because the rates in those districts differ from the rates in Perth. For instance, the water rate in Perth is 1s. on the annual value, and 1s. 6d. per 1,000 gallons for excess water, while at Fremantle the rates are, respectively, 6d. and 1s., and at Claremont 9d. and 1s. Therefore it would be extremely unfair to make one rate for the whole area, at any rate until we have a common water supply. At the present time, I may say, Guildford is supplied from the Goldfields Water Supply, Perth from certain bores and also the reservoir on the Darling Ranges, while Claremont draws its supply from bores, and Fre-

mantle has its own source of supply. The division into districts also prevents the districts other than Perth being burdened with the over capitalisation of the Perth water supply. In regard to this over capitalisation, I may say that it is almost a myth. Certainly at the time the water supply of Perth was taken over from the company, there was some £80,000 contained in the price as good will. That has been written down from the profits until it only appears on the balance sheet of to-day at £13,500. So, while the total cost of the Perth water supply to-day is £489,000, of this only £13,500 represents good will, the rest representing valuable works that have been carried out. The capital cost in each district will be ascertained, and then there will be a rate struck to cover that capital cost: consequently the capital cost not being so great in Fremantle and Claremont will not necessitate so high a rate in those districts as it will be necessary to strike in Perth. As time goes on there will, in all probability, be a general rate struck for the whole of the area. There may be a main source of supply which will furnish sufficient water for the whole area. That will probably run into several hundred thousands of pounds, and each district will be charged on a per capita basis to meet the amount. The Fremantle district will take in a portion of the suburbs, as will be seen by the map, while Claremont will take in Cottesloe. Perth will take in the surrounding suburbs, while the fourth district, Guildford, will take in the districts adjoining the boundaries of the Perth group. This provision almost entirely applies to the water and sewerage. The storm water area will be separate in each district. For instance, at the present time there is no storm water drainage at Claremont, and consequently they will not there have a storm water area. In Part V. it is provided that the works constructed by the Goldfields Water Supply in the Guildford district will become the property of the Minister when proclaimed by the Governor. Guildford is not supplied from the metropolitan source, but from the Goldfields Water Supply, and it will probably continue like that for some time. Later on, how-

ever, it may be proclaimed under the metropolitan supply and will then come under the jurisdiction of the Bill. Power is given in the Bill to the Governor to alter the districts, to re-divide them, or to increase or decrease the number of them. Part III. deals with the method of control. The administration is vested in the Minister. It arranges for a Minister of Water Supply Sewerage and Drainage, who shall be the Minister for Works for the time being. It creates the Minister a body corporate with perpetual succession and common seal and all the usual powers given to a board. For some years prior to the beginning of this year the Metropolitan Waterworks was managed in this way, and the Goldfields Water Supply is managed by a Minister to-day. Provision is contained in the Act under which that supply is administered for the appointment of a board, but such board has not been appointed up to the present. When the Act of 1904 was proclaimed at the beginning of this year it repealed the Metropolitan Waterworks Act and provided for a board. It was therefore compulsory to appoint a board to administer the Act. Such board was appointed, consisting of the Engineer-in-Chief, Mr. W. T. Loton, and Mr. M. F. Cavanagh. The Minister wisely restricted the powers of the board to the control of the existing water supply, and gave the necessary notice that all powers vested in him in regard to construction of sewerage and storm water works within the area were retained in his own hands. This Bill when it was first introduced in another place contained provision for a board representative of the Government and of the local authorities, but the members of another place in their wisdom have seen fit to alter that and to put the control under the Minister instead of in the hands of a board. This method of control is not new. It is at present in force under the Act I have mentioned, and it is also in force in South Australia, where the Minister controls a very much bigger scheme than the one under discussion. Power is given to the Minister to delegate his powers to his staff; because of course it would be an impossibility for the Mini-

ster as an individual to carry out all the duties laid down in the Bill. Part IV. gives power to create water reserves, and gives the Governor power to constitute and define the boundaries of such reserves, and to vest the reserves in the Minister. It gives the Minister power to take in any unalienated land within the boundaries of any water reserve or catchment area, and it also gives the Minister all the powers of a local board of health, which of course are necessary in order that the Minister may be able to keep catchment areas clean. Part V. deals with the vesting of this property, and the construction and maintenance of works. It provides for the transfer of waterworks, sewerage works and other properties from the present board to the Minister. It also provides that the waterworks at Guildford shall only become the property of the Minister when the Governor-in-Council so proclaims. The Bill makes it unlawful for any person to sink an artesian bore in the metropolitan area without the consent of the Minister. This power is absolutely necessary, because if artesian bores were to be put down indiscriminately it might seriously affect the water supply of the area. The Bill gives the power also in connection with the construction to enter upon lands and make excavations and all things necessary for the carrying out of ordinary work for water and sewerage; with the proviso that the Minister shall compensate for any actionable damages sustained in the exercise of powers so conferred, such disputes to be heard in a court of arbitration. Power is also given to resume all the necessary lands under the Public Works Act of 1902. All lands resumed are to be dealt with under the powers of that Act. That Act is always used by the Government for that purpose, and therefore it is not necessary to repeat the sections or the powers of that Act in a Bill of this kind. Part VI. deals with the supply and distribution of water, the protection of works, and the prevention of waste. It contains the machinery clauses for the supply and distribution of water. The only new feature provides that no meter rents shall be charged on meters supplied to private

residences. It has not been the rule lately to charge meter rents in the metropolitan area, but under the present Act the Minister has power to charge such rents. This power is taken from the Minister by the Bill. Part VII. deals entirely with drainage, and makes compulsory the connection of the buildings to the sewerage scheme as soon as a sewer is within convenient distance for connection. It provides that the Minister may make the connection, in the event of the owner failing to do so. Provision is also made for the cost of the connection being met by extended payments of 24 quarterly instalments with interest at 5 per cent. Considerable expense will be thrown upon the property owners of Perth immediately the sewerage scheme is complete; because when this Bill is passed every householder who can connect will be compelled to connect, and in some instances the cost will amount to a considerable sum of money. This will be rather hard on some people, and to get over the difficulty provision is made to allow them six years in which to pay off the amount. And I think it is a very just provision. At the same time it is not claimed as entirely new, because a similar provision to this is contained in most Acts of this kind in the Eastern States.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: More liberal in the Eastern States.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: This is?

Hon. W. Kingsmill: No, in the Eastern States.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes; in Victoria when the Sewerage Act came into force they allowed 10 years, but it is considered that they erred somewhat on the side of liberality, and it is thought that six years is a fair term here, consequently it is fixed in the Bill at six years. Part VIII. of the Bill deals with the rates and sale of water. There are the usual exemptions from rating on churches, municipal lands, etcetera, the same provisions as are contained in the Municipal Institutions Act. It provides for either rating on the annual value, and defines what "annual value"

is; and provides for rating on the unimproved value, if necessary, and defines what "unimproved value" is. It gives the Minister power to adopt in any district a general system of valuation of the capital and unimproved value, instead of valuation as prescribed; and it further provides that any person having the custody of valuations or rate books shall, without fee or charge, afford the Minister access to the same. That will cheapen administration, because if any local authority have valuations in their possession they must make them available to the Minister, otherwise it would be necessary in every case for the Minister to make separate valuations, and thereby heap up the cost of administration.

Hon. G. Randell: Why is the rate not struck on a definite day?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not know that I can answer the hon. member straight off. I do not know any particular reason why it is not made on any specific date as in the Municipal Act. The Bill provides for appeal in the ordinary way against valuation of any property included in the rate book, but no appeal will be allowed when the valuation does not exceed the current valuation of the same land by the local authority or the Commissioner of Taxation. A similar provision is contained in the Land and Income Tax Act, that an appeal does not lie if the valuation does not exceed that of the local authority; it still gives the owner an opportunity to appeal in the first place. If the local authority rates an owner he has an opportunity of appealing, but if he does not do so the rate stands both for the local authority and for the Water and Sewerage Bill also. Appeals shall be made to the Minister, from whose decision further appeal may be made to the local court having jurisdiction within the district. The Bill clearly distinguishes between the two classes of service, which is not the case in the existing Act. That is to say a separate rate will be struck for water and a separate rate for sewerage and storm water. It further provides that the Minister shall levy water rates in respect of all ratable land within a water district, whether occupied or not,

and situated wholly or partially within 60 yards of any main or pipe. That is the usual provision. If a person connects with the water or not, so long as the pipe goes by his place and is within 60 yards, he must pay the rate whether he uses the water or not. The Bill provides that the Minister may levy sewerage rates in respect of all ratable land within any district in which a sewer or any part thereof is completed and ready for use; and it provides that no land shall be ratable for sewerage purposes unless it is capable, in the opinion of the Minister, of being connected with the sewer. That is to say, immediately the sewerage system passes a person's place and it is ready to have the connections made, the person will receive notice from the Minister and henceforth he will have to pay the sewerage rate. This is an improvement on the Act of 1894, which provides that if a person resides within 220 yards of the sewer he has to connect up with the sewerage system. It is a long distance, 660 feet, and the position is now made much easier, for the Bill provides that the premises are to be connected when, in the opinion of the Minister they are capable of being connected. The water and sewerage districts, as I have already mentioned, are shown on the map and defined in the schedule, and the storm water districts will be created by proclamation from time to time as the drains are constructed. These will only comprise the areas directly benefited through the construction of the drains, therefore, only the area that benefits will be rated. The whole of that area may not be benefited from the storm water drains, although the sewerage drains and the water mains may go through the entire area; still, it does not follow that the whole area will be benefited by the storm water drains, therefore, the district proclaimed will only be that district benefited by the storm water drains, that is the only district that shall pay rates for the storm water drains. The water rate in any one area shall not exceed 1s. in the pound on the annual ratable value, or 2d. in the pound on the capital unimproved value. That is no new imposition, because the rate at the present time in Perth is 1s., and it is simply re-enacting what

is the present rate for Perth. The sewerage and storm water rates altogether shall not in any one area exceed 1s. 6d. in the pound on the annual ratable value of the land rated, or 3d. in the pound on the capital unimproved value. That is, that the combined rate shall not exceed 1s. 6d. But the Minister may make and levy a minimum of the prescribed amount, not exceeding 10s. upon any land the annual rate of which does not exceed 10s. Members will realise this, that in paying the 1s. 6d., or it may be only 1s. at first, or even less in some districts, it all depends on the capital value of the work; the work will be assessed for interest and sinking fund, and the rate will be struck accordingly. I do not wish members to think this is an entirely new impost as the present municipal sanitary rate will be saved. Discretionary power is given to the Minister to make reduced charges to local or Government departments. The Bill provides that although rates may be obtained in the first instance from the occupier, they are recoverable by him from the owner, and for this purpose the occupier may deduct the amount from the rent due. It permits the mortgagee, who has paid rates, to add the amount to the principal sum advanced by him, and provision is made for 5 per cent. interest being charged on any rates overdue for 12 months; and power is also given to the Minister to allow a discount of 5 per cent. for prompt payments. This is the usual provision, which is to be found in some of the Acts, and it is a very good one to secure prompt payment and save cost of collector's fees. Power is also given to the Minister to lease any land on which rates are overdue for three years, and if rates are overdue for five years the Minister has power to sell the land. Part IX. of the Bill is the financial portion of the measure, and it provides for the transfer of all assets and liabilities from the Metropolitan Board of Water Supply to the Minister. It provides that the Minister shall prepare a statement of all works transferred, and all moneys expended on works. When the Minister has taken over these works he shall allot to each district a proportionate amount of moneys ex-

pending and shall continue to do this when there are further moneys expended. That is to say, from time to time as money is expended in a district it shall be added to the capital cost of the district, and the sinking fund and interest will be charged accordingly. Where works are made for the benefit of more than one district the capital cost shall be allotted on a population basis. This is necessary in order to permit of differential rating. In order to get over the difficulty which may arise through an alteration in the population of any district, should it increase rapidly, arrangements may be made for the cost of administration to be re-allocated from time to time, but that is a thing which is not likely to happen very often. Still, it is a necessary provision contained in the Bill. Power is also given for the Minister to borrow money, with this proviso, that he must receive the consent of the Governor-in-Council, and power is given to the Minister to borrow for the construction of works, for the discharge of the principal of any existing loan, or the consolidation of debts, and for any other purpose approved by the Governor. All such moneys borrowed by the Minister are payable by debentures to be charged and secured upon the works constructed, or vested in the Minister under this Bill. It is further provided that before raising any loan the Minister shall make provision for repayment by the creation of a sinking fund, exactly as it is to be found in the Municipal Act. The rest of this part of the Bill contains the usual machinery clauses for raising and paying off the loans. Part X. of the Bill deals with accounts and audits. It places the matter of audit altogether under the Auditor General, who shall submit an annual report to Parliament. Part XI. of the Bill deals entirely with by-laws. It is the usual power to make by-laws to regulate the management of the work and the prevention of waste, etcetera. It gives power to make by-laws imposing penalties not exceeding £20 for any breach of the Bill. All the by-laws must have the approval of the Governor-in-Council, and when gazetted will have the force of law. It further provides that these by-laws must be laid on the Table of the House

within 14 days, if the House is in session, and if Parliament is not in session they must be laid upon the Table of the House within 14 days of the commencement of the next ensuing session. The last part of the Bill, that is Part XII., contains the general provisions that may have been omitted, and which, probably, could not be inserted in other parts of the Bill. These provisions deal with the method of service of notice, etcetera. It gives the right to any occupier to recover from an owner any moneys he may have paid on an owner's behalf, either through action in court or as a set-off against rent. It provides a penalty clause of £200 or 12 months' imprisonment for refusal to give up peaceable possession to the Minister; and it provides that all actions pending against the Minister shall commence within six months of the time when the act complained of was committed. It permits the Governor to suspend within the metropolitan area any provisions in any local Government Act relating to water supply or sewerage. These provisions are absolutely necessary because under the Health Bill, for instance, which we passed recently, there is provision for sewerage which will become inoperative if this Bill is passed into law. It is set out in the Health Bill that these provisions shall not be in operation against the provisions of any other Bill. As I stated at the beginning, this is a Bill which applies entirely to the metropolitan area, and it is for the purpose of governing the water supply and sewerage of that area. The only new provisions contained in it are the striking of the sewerage and storm-water rates; the water rate will be exactly as it is now. The rest of the Bill consists of machinery purely and simply for the carrying out of the water supply and sewerage for the metropolitan area. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. J. W. Langsford, debate adjourned.

RETURN — LANDS ALIENATED,
PURCHASE MONEY UNPAID.

Debate resumed from 12th November on the motion of the Hon. G. Throssell.

"That a return be laid upon the Table of the House showing the amount of money owing to the Government to 30th June last on all lands now in course of alienation," and on the amendment of Hon. W. Kingsmill, "That after 'House' the words 'within 14 days of the assembling of Parliament in each year' be inserted."

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. D. Connolly): I do not intend to oppose this motion; at the same time I think it is only right that I should point out to the House that a return of this kind will involve a considerable amount of work and expense. In the first place Mr. Throssell said that it would probably only mean a sum of addition. Such, however, is not the case; if it were it would be a small matter indeed, but the books of the Lands Department are kept in such a way that they do not show the balances owing; they only show the amounts paid each year by the farmers. There are some 30,000 accounts in the books of the department, and each account would have to be taken separately, and the balances owing would have to be worked out. The books simply show that A. B. has paid a certain amount on the area he holds, and that he has so many more payments to make. They do not show the actual amounts still owing.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: It would be very convenient if they did.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: We would have to alter the whole of the books. Mr. Piesse moved a similar motion in 1907, and I then pointed out that the books of the department were being altered, and later on, probably, a return could be made out much more easily. I pointed out further that the books were in use all day, and as they would be available for the purposes of this return only at night time, it would take three or four months to do what the hon. member asked, and, moreover, that the cost would be something like £240. I also mentioned that the form of book-keeping of the Lands Department would be altered to the card system, and then it would be easier to prepare a return. The books have not yet been completely altered, but

at the same time a return could now be got out in a month or two at a cost of probably £100. It is now for the House to say whether, in their opinion, it is worth while to get out this return, which will involve a month or two of labour at a cost of £100. The return would certainly show the amount that was owing to the country. Mr. Throssell mentioned that in his opinion it was about three million pounds; the statistical clerk of the Lands Department states that some time ago he made a fairly approximate calculation of the amount, and it came to about £2,800,000. The calculation of Mr. Throssell, therefore, is not very wide of the mark, and if this is the only information the hon. member wishes the House to have, I think it could be accepted as a fact that the balance owing on the conditional purchase leases in course of alienation is approximately £2,800,000 to £3,000,000.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: That is practically £100 each.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It would be quite that. Mr. Kingsmill has moved an amendment and, personally, while I do not intend to oppose the motion, I think the department should not be put to the unnecessary expense of preparing this return. All that it can show is that there are three million pounds owing to the Government on these lands, and will it be worth spending £100 to ascertain the exact amount? Mr. Kingsmill's amendment is that the return shall be laid on the Table annually 14 days after the assembling of Parliament. I would suggest that Mr. Kingsmill should alter his amendment so that the return might be contained in the annual report of the Under Secretary for Lands. If this is to be given annually to the House it might well be contained in the report of the Under Secretary, and then it would be laid before members annually.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Is the last report on the Table?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I cannot say from memory, but I think most of the departmental reports have already been laid on the Table of the House.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN (South): I am glad that the Colonial Secretary is not

opposing this motion, because it seems to me that it asks for information that it is desirable should be made available. It has a somewhat important bearing on our financial position as regards the State generally, but what I wish particularly to refer to is the matter mentioned by Mr. Piesse in the course of the discussion on the proposal the other day. He then pointed out that an almost identical motion was passed by this Chamber as far back as July, 1907, more than two years ago, and that it was passed on a division by 15 votes to 5. I would like to draw the attention of members to that statement, especially those members who have regard for the status of this Chamber as a part of the Legislature of the country. If a resolution of that kind is to be carried in this House and it is to be consistently ignored because it may cause a certain amount of inconvenience and trouble, then, of what use is this Chamber: of what avail is it for us to sit here and discuss the questions of the day. The Colonial Secretary has said that it would cost something like £240, but when this Chamber desires by such a large majority that certain information should be supplied surely an amount of that kind should not stand in the way of the information being procured.

The Colonial Secretary: I have already explained that the House adjourned before the return could be completed.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: That is a very poor excuse indeed. I think that when the House asks by a large majority for certain information, whether the House is sitting or not the information should be made available in some form or other. If necessary it could, later on, have been published in the Press. All these things require a certain amount of trouble and inconvenience and expense, and if that expense of £240 was greater than the information was worth, then it was the duty of the representative of the Government to bring the subject before the House and point out that the expense would be £240, and then ask whether the House still required the information. It was for the House to say whether or not the information was worth that amount

of money, but the House having asked for it by an overwhelming majority, I think it was the bounden duty of the Government to supply the information. It seems to me this is not the only case that might be cited where this House has been treated with something approaching contempt. I have known during my short experience in this House where Messages asking for the concurrence or otherwise of another place have been sent from this Chamber and those Messages have not been replied to. We all know, furthermore, that at the end of the session it is customary for a number of Bills to be brought down, and we are expected to pass them in one sitting. This all seems to me a part of the same policy of indifference that is displayed towards this House. If this House is to be abolished it should be done in a constitutional way. I would not be surprised, if the party in power were avowedly opposed to the existence of this Chamber, and adopted a policy of that kind.

The PRESIDENT: Will the hon. member confine himself to the amendment before the House.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: With all due respect I was referring to a matter that had already been debated, and I would respectfully submit it has an important bearing on the motion. If the policy that is going to be adopted concerning this motion is to be similar to that adopted towards the resolution passed previously, of what avail will it be if we pass it? That is why I have brought forward the matter, and I submit it for the consideration of those members who have regard for the status of this Chamber. I trust they will consider the question in its relation to certain other matters that occasionally are brought under the notice of the House as to the way in which this Chamber is treated. I wish to say I am not one of those who are sticklers for the existence even of this Chamber, but so long as it is in existence it should be recognised by the Government of the day and treated with respect.

Hon. E. M. CLARKE (South-West): I would like to ask the Colonial Secretary whether the amount of forfeitures that

occur would affect this return to any appreciable extent, or whether the forfeited land is applied for by other applicants.

The Colonial Secretary: It is always taken up by other applicants.

Hon. G. THROSSELL (on amendment): I am quite willing to accept the amendment proposed by Mr. Kingsmill, and I am glad to hear from the Colonial Secretary that the report will cost only £240, and will take only two months to prepare. Every member will agree it will be money well spent to show the country that we have £3,000,000 owing to us. We are spending so much money in the settlement of land, so I think the information is demanded. If the Under Secretary for Lands were to give us the information every year in his report, of course, it would do away with the need for having the information tabled. I am given to understand that the Minister for Lands is in accord that this information should be given, and under the new system of bookkeeping he is now initiating it will enable him to give the information to the country. I shall be glad if, as a result of this motion, this information will be available. I trust that the motion will not meet with the same fate as that moved by Mr. Piesse, which was accepted by the Colonial Secretary in good faith, yet we heard nothing more about it. It becomes the duty of the Government to show what the result of their land settlement scheme has been, and I am sure the information that we have £3,000,000 owing to us will be gratifying to the House and the country at large.

Hon. G. RANDELL (Metropolitan): Does that close the debate?

The PRESIDENT: No.

Hon. G. RANDELL: If the only object of the motion is to secure the statement that we have an asset of between £2,000,000 and £3,000,000, or approximately £3,000,000, that object has already been arrived at by the statement the Colonial Secretary has made, and it will go forth to the world with just as much force. I should imagine, as a detailed statement from the department. I hardly think it is worth while to spend £240 on

getting up a statement when we are now pretty well assured that approximately £3,000,000, according to a rough calculation made, is owing.

The Colonial Secretary: It is between £2,800,000 and £3,000,000.

Hon. G. RANDELL: Quite so. Therefore, I hardly think it is worth while insisting upon the statement being got out and made to Parliament. We all know, and are very pleased, that a large amount of land is in process of being alienated, and that the payments are met fairly well, and that where they are not met, or where the people wish to retire from their holdings, the Government have no difficulty in finding others to take possession. It is to me a certainty that these payments will be met in due course, and the statement already made by the Colonial Secretary will present the State in the best possible aspect to the outside world, or to the money lenders in any part. I am in accord with Mr. Kirwan in saying that a resolution of this House should not be ignored. An explanation has been made by the Leader of the House why this return was not prepared, but I think some steps should have been taken, and I think the House has been slighted in that respect at the hands of the Government of the day, so that I trust the remarks made by Mr. Kirwan and others will be remembered, and that when we pass resolutions of this kind, especially by a large majority, it will be seen that it is our intention to have the information asked for. I think the House will maintain its privileges, and I have not the slightest inclination to think that the Legislative Council is to be abolished this year, or next year, or yet for a considerable time to come. I think the Legislative Council is an important part of the Constitution of the country, and that it cannot be contemplated with equanimity or for a moment by any thinking man, or by any person who desires the best interests of the State. That the Legislative Council as a House of review should be obliterated from our statute-book. I trust no attempt will be made to do so, or to lower the status of the Chamber. In regard to the motion.

I scarcely know how I shall vote. I understand that Mr. Kingsmill is inclined to accept the suggestion made by the Leader of the House that the return should be presented with the annual report. The question is of course whether these reports will be presented in time for Parliament; I presume they will be up to the 30th of June in each year. I think there is another aspect of the question, and that is, that these amounts are continually changing. Happily persons seeking land are still coming forward, and in considerable numbers, and the return made in one year will need to be supplemented by that made in another year. I think there would be some value perhaps in having the information—

Hon. W. Kingsmill: If it only altered the system of bookkeeping it would be good.

Hon. G. RANDELL: I think there would be some value perhaps in having it in the form suggested, that is in the annual report; and I am in accord with the interjection of the hon. member that there should be an alteration in the system of accounts. I think the department ought to be able to tell every week, or every month if they keep their accounts in a proper way and have a column as suggested showing the difference between payments owing and those made. It would be very convenient to have the information, especially in the form of the annual report. I hope, if the department have not already decided to alter the system of keeping these lands' accounts, they will do so at once for the purpose of having the information very clearly, not only before Parliament, but before the Ministers, for apparently Ministers seemed to be as much in the dark as members of Parliament and the outside public. There is another aspect of the case which I am scarcely justified in mentioning more than in a brief manner. I have an uneasy feeling as to how the capital account is manipulated in regard to the sales of these lands. Some of these are capital accounts.

The Colonial Secretary: What do you mean by capital accounts?

Hon. G. RANDELL: Payment for the land is capital account.

The Colonial Secretary: That goes into consolidated revenue.

Hon. G. RANDELL: It goes into consolidated revenue and is wiped out in the administration of the country; is that it?

The Colonial Secretary: Yes.

Hon. G. RANDELL: I was afraid that was the case. I hope sooner or later—it has often been spoken of—the revenue derivable from our lands sold or alienated from the Crown, and which cannot be again obtained, should be directed into a particular channel for the introduction of immigrants, or for the assistance of those who are on the land, or who contemplate going on the land. Of course that comes out of general revenue now, but it should be charged to a separate account. However, I do not intend to labour that point. I did not intend to speak on it, and perhaps I could not do so with practical effect at the present moment. I conclude by saying that I shall vote for the motion if the suggestion of the Colonial Secretary is accepted by Mr. Kingsmill.

The Colonial Secretary: That it should be done in the Under Secretary's annual report?

Hon. G. RANDELL: Yes.

Hon. S. STUBBS (Metropolitan-Suburban): I agree with the remarks of hon. members who have stated that this motion should be treated with respect, and I trust that the mover of the motion will take the sense of the House, and that it will not be withdrawn. No private business firm would have much difficulty in arriving at the amount of indebtedness of each client, and I feel sure that the sooner the system of book-keeping in the Lands Department is put on a sound business footing, the better it will be. I hope the House will pass Mr. Throssell's motion.

The PRESIDENT: The amendment is before the House at the present time.

Hon. S. STUBBS: I hope the House will pass the amendment, and that the return will be got out in the quickest possible time, because the business of the House is to get any returns asked for, and it was altogether wrong that after a motion moved two years ago in the House and

carried by a large majority the return should not have been placed on the Table immediately the House met next session whether asked for by the hon. member who moved it or not. I maintain the dignity of the House should be maintained always, and so long as I have the privilege of being a member of the House I shall endeavour to see that the wishes of the House are carried out in their entirety. I will support the amendment.

Hon. E. McLARTY (South-West): I would like to say that while I entirely agree with the country knowing the position of what moneys are owing for lands, I consider that when a return entails an expenditure of even £240 we should study whether there is absolute need for it. Were it not for the assurance of the Leader of the House, that the money owing is between £2,800,000 and £3,000,000, I would be inclined to vote for the motion; in the face of that assurance and knowing what it would cost to get out the return, it would be well for the motion to be amended. It is clear that the cost would be great considering the present system of book-keeping in the department, which I agree is to be regretted, for the department should surely be in a position to give within a very short time all information on a point such as is desired by the motion. That information would be available at any moment if it were a properly conducted business, and such information should be obtainable without two months' time being spent in getting it. However, in view of the fact that the suggestion has been made that the information could be included in the report of the Under Secretary for Lands every year, I think we might now let the matter rest, and not put the country to the expense of £240.

The Colonial Secretary: One hundred pounds.

Hon. E. McLARTY: Even that sum is a consideration in these days, and I do not think very much benefit would be derived from pressing the motion. I am quite satisfied with the assurance that we have about three millions of money owing to us in this respect. I intend to oppose the motion.

Hon. J. W. LANGSFORD (Metropolitan-Suburban): I understand that Mr. Kingsmill is willing to agree that this information shall be embodied in the annual report of the Under Secretary for Lands. In that event possibly he will agree to withdraw his amendment if one were moved in substitution thereof, providing that a return showing the amount of money owing to the Government to the 30th June in each year on the lands in course of alienation should be embodied in the annual report of the Under Secretary for Lands. I think that will meet the wishes of members.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: I ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Hon. J. W. LANGSFORD moved an amendment—

That all the words after "return" be struck out, and "showing amount of money owing to the Government to the 30th June in each year on all land in course of alienation be embodied in the annual report of the Under Secretary for Lands" inserted in lieu.

Amendment passed.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY (East): I desire to support the remarks made by Mr. Kirwan with regard to the fact that no notice was taken by the Government of a similar motion to the present one passed by this House some two years ago. We should support any member who draws attention to such a state of affairs. I remember well the occasion on which Mr. Piesse very emphatically impressed on members the necessity for carrying his motion, and how at that time a very good excuse was provided in that there was then being undertaken a complete alteration in the system of book-keeping in the Lands Department. It seems unreasonable that now, two years later, exactly the same reasons are given in opposition to the preparation of the return. Surely the calling for such a return by the House two years ago should have been a sufficient direction to those establishing the new system of book-keeping in the Lands Department to take steps whereby the information needed by members could always in the future be easily and rapidly

obtained. After all it only means the insertion of another column in the books, and it is hard to understand how the provision of that extra column is going to cost an extra £100. Unless information of this kind can be obtained from the books, there is no use in having any books or accounts kept in the Lands Department. Surely those books should enable one to see at a glance what lands are being sold for, what they have realised, how much is in arrears and how much will be received in the future if all the settlers pay up the full amount of their indebtedness. Every business house when making application for financial accommodation has to put before those from whom the money is to be obtained full particulars as to the state of their affairs, and particularly details showing what moneys are due to them. In every department of the State where there are large business undertakings such information should be able to be provided at once. Mr. Kirwan did well to draw attention to the manner in which the House has been flouted in this direction, and I am very pleased to support his remarks. As to the motion now amended, I think it meets with all our wishes, and I am pleased we are likely to have a definite statement in the future in the report of the Under Secretary for Lands, showing how the finances of the department really stand.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (on amendment): I did not offer any objection to the motion, but I pointed out that it would probably cost £100 to get out such a return as that needed. I doubt whether that cost would be materially increased if the information were provided annually, and therefore I thought that if the expense had to be incurred it would be better if an amendment were introduced providing that the return be prepared each year giving the information desired. With regard to the return of a similar nature asked for by Mr. Piessé some two years ago, the House certainly affirmed the principle. I am at one with members who want to maintain the rights and privileges of this House, and no matter whether I am leader of the House or a private member I shall never be one to do away with any of

those privileges. I would point out, however, that the motion passed two years ago necessitated the preparation of a return which would have taken some months to get out. The House adjourned in the meantime and then there was an election, and nothing more was said about the return.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: It was referred to on the 13th December, five months after the motion was passed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: If the member had been listening he would have heard me say that the return could not be got out for some months.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Was it started before the session expired?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: As I do not administer the department I cannot say if a start was made with the return or not. If members were so anxious that the return should be provided, surely they might have given the Government a reminder during the last two years that it had not yet been supplied.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: When a question was asked on the point the Colonial Secretary requested that notice be given.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: When was that?

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: On the 13th December, 1907.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have already explained that the motion was moved in the session of 1907, and that on account of the system under which the books were then kept it meant many months to get the report out. The question was asked during that session but it was not possible to get the return out in that session, and nothing further was said about it afterwards. I have no objection whatever to offer to the motion.

Question, as amended, put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT—STATE OF BUSINESS.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. D. Connolly): On account of the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Bill, the principal work now before the House, having been adjourned for a week, there

was only a very small amount of business on the Notice Paper: therefore it had been suggested that we should adjourn for one week. In view of this he moved—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday next.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: When the important Bill was adjourned for a whole week it had struck him that the Minister must have something else for members to do. In a modest way he would suggest to the Minister that as far as possible it would be well to avoid the rush and congestion which seemed inevitable for a later stage in the session; moreover it seemed a pity to bring members long distances for one day's work a week. It would be well so to plan the work that when members were brought to the House there would be a fair amount of business for them to do; and above all to avoid rushing important measures without due consideration near the end of the session.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: Mr. Cullen's remarks were deserving of support. He. (Mr. Kirwan) had travelled from Kalgoolie just for the one sitting of the House. Certainly when the House was called together there should be some business for members to get through. Whilst it was very easy for metropolitan members to attend, it was a somewhat serious matter for those who had to make long journeys. The Minister would doubtless realise this and would sympathise with the suggestion that when the House was called together at least two or three days work should be in readiness to be gone on with.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (in reply): The two hon. members were scarcely fair in this matter. He had always studied the convenience of hon. members and had frequently taken the precaution of asking hon. members what best suited them. It certainly did not suit him to have the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Bill adjourned for one week, because next week there would be a good deal of other work to be gone on with, including the Fire Brigades Bill. It was very much easier for him to get rid of

the Bills one at a time than to face the work in bulk. Before the House had met this afternoon he had asked hon. members if it would suit them to go on with the Bill on the following day, and also on Friday last, as soon as the Bill was printed, he took the trouble to post a copy to each member so that if it was so desired they could be ready to go on with the Bill to-day; but when Mr. Langsford, a metropolitan member, had moved the adjournment for a week, he (the Colonial Secretary) did not feel that he alone was justified in objecting to such adjournment on a Bill of such importance to the metropolis. The reason for not opposing an adjournment of the House for a week was, in the first place, to give metropolitan members time to study a Bill which affected them so vitally, and, in the second place, to provide a larger amount of work for members when they should meet again. Mr. Cullen seemed to think that it was rushing the work through; it was quite the reverse.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: By way of personal explanation he would like to say that the Minister had apparently misunderstood him. He (Mr. Cullen) had not complained that the Minister was rushing business; what he had said was that as far as possible the Minister should avoid so planning the work as to bring about a rush of business at a later stage in the session.

Question put and passed.

(House adjourned at 6.5 p.m.)