

merely determines a time when the section shall operate in the Assessment Act.

Hon. G. Taylor: And in doing so the clause amends Section 55 of the Assessment Act.

Mr. Speaker: There is no amendment whatever. If the hon. member reads the clause clearly, he will see that it does not mean levying or making any provision from levying or for collecting. All it does is to say that the tax shall be free from any other law, or the operation of any other law, as it was passed.

Hon. G. Taylor: And in doing that you have to suspend Section 55 of the Assessment Act.

Mr. Speaker: Undoubtedly, but that is another matter. That is distinct from the point relative to assessments. The clause does not deal with assessments nor yet with levying. Therefore, it is a Bill purely to impose a land tax and an income tax, and does not define the method of collection.

Hon. G. Taylor: My point is that it amends the Assessment Act.

Mr. Speaker: It does not amend it at all.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	9
Noes	..	..	..	..	15

Majority against .. 6

AYES.

Mr. Barnard	Mr. North
Mr. Brown	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Davy	Mr. Taylor
Mr. Lindsay	Mr. Griffiths
Sir James Mitchell	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Chesson	Mr. Millington
Mr. Collier	Mr. Munsie
Mr. Corboy	Mr. Troy
Mr. Coverley	Mr. A. Wansbrough
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Heron	Mr. Withers
Miss Holman	Mr. Pantou
Mr. Lambert	(Teller.)

Question thus negatived.

Committee resumed.

Clause put and passed.

Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

House adjourned at 10.40 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 30th August, 1927.

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

QUESTION—POLICE, TRAFFIC DUTY.

Mr. LATHAM asked the Minister for Police: 1, Is it a fact that the police officers stationed in country districts do not observe the instructions contained in Subsection (4) of Section 20 of "The Traffic Act, 1919," namely:—"It shall be the duty of every police officer to aid and assist inspectors in the exercise and discharge of their powers and duties"? 2, If so, will he instruct the police to do so accordingly?

The MINISTER FOR POLICE replied: 1, No. 2, Answered by No. 1.

QUESTION—PUBLIC SERVICE, TEMPORARY OFFICERS.

Mr. J. MacCallum SMITH asked the Premier: 1, How many persons have been appointed to the permanent staff, to date, under Subsection (3) of Section 6 of "The Public Service Appeal Board Act, 1920"? 2, Will he call for a report and inform the House as to the number of persons who are now eligible for such appointment, and why their applications if lodged have been refused? 3, What is the total number of such persons in the Public Service who have served five years or over continuously as on the 31st July last?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Thirty-two. 2, If this information is desired, I suggest that the hon. member move for it in the usual way. 3, Eighty-five.

QUESTION—TOURIST DEPARTMENT, HOUSING.

Mr. A. WANSBROUGH asked the Premier: In anticipation of the authorisation of a new State Savings Bank on the land now occupied by the Tourist Department, where is it proposed to house the Tourist Department?

The PREMIER replied: The matter will receive consideration.

QUESTION—TIMBER INDUSTRY REGULATION ACT.

Miss HOLMAN asked the Minister for Works: 1, Have the regulations under "The Timber Industry Regulation Act, 1926," been drawn up? 2, If not, why not? 3, If they have, when will they be laid upon the Table of the House?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, 2, and 3, It is anticipated that these regulations will be gazetted within a few days, after which they will be laid upon the Table of the House.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Richardson, leave of absence for one month granted to Mr. Teesdale (Roebourne) on the ground of urgent private business.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1. Northam Municipal Ice Works Act Amendment.
2. Agricultural Lands Purchase Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Council.

BILL—LAND TAX AND INCOME TAX.

Third Reading.

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [4.37]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [4.38]: When we discussed the Bill the other night, I had not read a speech made by a Minister in another place in which he said the acceptance of the Financial Agreement would mean the cancellation

of the sinking fund and an advantage to the Treasury for the next 20 years of £400,000 per annum. In other words, that the cancellation of the securities held in the sinking fund, the non-payment of the sinking fund at the present varying rates, which are never less than $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., would mean that very solid advantage to the Treasury. Apparently the Treasury are anticipating the passing of the Bill that will mean the cancellation of the sinking fund and the consequent advantages I have mentioned. If we are to have £400,000 per annum by these means, I think we could reasonably be expected to review the taxation to be imposed. If we have enough money now to carry on the services of the country, we are not entitled to £400,000 more. There is a point in it, and I think we ought as soon as possible discuss that Financial Agreement and get it out of the way, for it has some bearing on legislation of this character.

The Premier: That would not help, for even if we got it out of the way it could have no bearing on legislation of this character until it was passed in the other States.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Of course we are more or less in the dark as to what has occurred. It is true the Minister for Justice made a statement, but of course that conveys only a part of the information that it is necessary the public and the House should have. I hope the Premier will distribute the Agreement as soon as he can. He has been good enough to let me have a copy, but it would be well if every member had a copy and we considered it as soon as possible. The Premier probably will say it is awaiting consideration by other Parliaments not now sitting, and that the Federal Parliament has not yet given consideration to it. Still, I think this Parliament ought to have an opportunity to consider it. Of course it may never become law, may never be carried into effect, but in the meantime we in this House are without information that is given to another House fairly fully, certainly more fully than we have it here.

The Premier: No more information has been given than has appeared in the Press and has been given in this House.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am not permitted to quote from "Hansard," but the Minister in another place said the passing of the Financial Agreement would mean the cancellation of our sinking fund and

the consequent advantage to the Treasurer of £400,000 per annum. He was then replying to criticism levelled at the Agreement in another place. It is a pity members here have not copies of that Agreement. Of course I doubt if the critics in another place had the Agreement when they criticised it.

The Premier: They did not.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No, I expect the Premier let me have the first copy that he had.

The Premier: All they had was what they had read in the newspaper.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I knew, of course, that if the Premier let anybody have a copy, the Leader of the Opposition in this House would be the first to get it.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: The Leader of the Country Party ought to get a copy, too.

The Premier: I received only two copies. As soon as I get sufficient I intend to distribute them to all members.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I asked for and received a copy, but I do not feel that I can discuss it at any length, because other members, not having copies, would be at a disadvantage. However, the position is that the Minister in another place stated that £400,000 per annum would come immediately to the Treasury as the result of the Financial Agreement. If that is so, we ought to review the taxation. The Premier himself will admit that if it is certain the £400,000 per annum is to come—I doubt if it will come with my vote—and we are to repudiate our sinking fund liability, the people of the State ought to have the advantage of that £400,000. An agreement of this sort, of course, is more or less a Government agreement. It means an advantage to the several State Governments and the Commonwealth Government rather than to the individual, for it does not matter to him whether he pays here or pays there. When, a few days ago, the Leader of the Country Party raised this very point, I did not think we had arrived at the stage where we could agree. Now I take it the sinking fund would be cancelled and we would get the £400,000 per annum. In another place the Minister has said that, and so we are now all aware of it before we have passed the third reading of this Bill. The Treasurer will realise that £400,000 additional revenue per annum is a tremendous sum, and that he will be very happy for a number of years if he can get it, even with a very much reduced taxation.

Mr. Thomson: Is that over and above what we shall get under the financial agreement?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It is over and above the £170,000 that we receive now. I do not quite see how we can repudiate our responsibilities to our creditors in the old land, but if we did cancel the sinking fund in our own favour, it would mean an advantage of £400,000 a year. The Premier has anticipated some considerable advantage as from the 1st January. In the July statement he anticipated some advantage. If it be an advantage of £400,000 a year, the Premier himself will agree that there should be a reduction of the taxation to be imposed.

MR. THOMSON (Katanning) [4.46]: I am pleased that the statement I made in the House last week has been borne out by the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition. It goes to show that the House should be in a position to judge what is a fair and reasonable amount of taxation to levy before the Bill is passed. Yet we are asked to pass the Bill, though on the statement just made by the Leader of the Opposition, we are to get an advantage of £400,000 by way of suspension of sinking fund, independent of the amount we are to receive from the Commonwealth during the next five years. The present position is certainly very unsatisfactory. I wish respectfully to point out to the Premier that while we sit in opposition to the Government, the party on the cross benches constitute a separate and distinct party who, I trust, will receive the consideration to which they are entitled. As a political section, we are entitled to the consideration that I take it was extended to the Labour Party when they were only small in numbers and sat on this side of the House. We are fully entitled to know the true position regarding the finances of the State.

Hon. W. J. George: Do not the Government let you know?

Mr. E. B. Johnston: You got a copy of the agreement and we ought to have had a copy.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I asked for it.

Mr. THOMSON: A copy of such an important document as the proposed financial agreement should have been made available to us without our asking for it. Frequently members of the House are told they should not take notice of statements

that appear in the Press, and yet the Government have repeatedly said that the first intimation they had received of various matters of Federal import was when the particulars were published in the Press.

The Minister for Mines: That is true, too.

Mr. THOMSON: When the Bill was presented to the House we should have been able to discuss the position fully in the light of the revenue that would be available. The Land and Income Tax Assessment Act contains quite a lot of anomalies, and I should like the Premier to give an assurance that those anomalies will receive consideration. Last week we endeavoured to get an amendment made to the Bill, but you, Sir, ruled it out of order. I do not intend to discuss that phase of the matter, but we consider that a certain amount of injustice is being done. I could quote other anomalies that ought to be rectified, and unless the Government provide an opportunity to rectify them, we shall be faced with increased taxation on land, because the valuations are being increased, and that will mean more money for the coffers of the Treasury. On top of that we learn from the statement made by the Minister in another place that a saving of £400,000 will be effected on sinking fund. If from the disabilities grant we are to receive an additional £353,000—

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No, £212,000.

Mr. THOMSON: Well, we received £565,000 for the two years. If we are now going to save £400,000—

Hon. W. J. George: It will be only a reallocation, not a saving.

Mr. THOMSON: I am guided by the statement made by the Leader of the Opposition. As I read the proposed Financial Agreement, the State must benefit by such a saving. The Government should favourably consider the request to give the House an opportunity to deal with the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act. Last week we were unsuccessful in our efforts to amend the Land Tax and Income Tax Bill, but we are quite willing to take our beating as our friends of the Labour Party took their beating when they occupied these seats, looking forward to the day when there will be a swing of the pendulum.

Member: That will not be for a very long time.

Mr. THOMSON: I am not sure of that. No one was more surprised than were members opposite when they obtained control of the Treasury benches a little over three years ago, and I remind the House that history has a habit of repeating itself. In the course of time—I may not be here to witness it—members on this side will be occupying the Treasury benches. Though we are in a minority at present, we are nevertheless entitled to ask that the people we represent should receive reasonable relief from certain taxation that in their opinion is burdensome.

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder—in reply) [4.53]: I do not wish to traverse again the ground I covered last week. The Leader of the Country Party talks about relief from taxation. I think I showed conclusively the very great relief that has been given to farmers as well as to every other section of the community during the last three years, notwithstanding the small increase made in land taxation. I give no promise whatever that the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act will be considered this session. As to the need for this taxation, it would be utterly foolish for any Treasurer to reduce taxation on the mere assumption that the Financial Agreement will be adopted. Am I to make wholesale reductions in taxation now, assuming that the Financial Agreement will become law? If it should fail to become law, where would the State be?

Mr. Thomson: You could hold this Bill up for a time.

The PREMIER: If the Agreement failed to become law, we should be faced with a huge deficit and find ourselves back to where we were three, four or five years ago. The time to reduce taxation is when we know precisely where we stand, and we shall not know that during this year. I have no foresight that will enable me to say definitely whether the Agreement will become law or not. I may be able to anticipate what will happen in this House, but how can I tell what will happen in the Parliaments of the other five States and of the Commonwealth itself? To make reductions and then find ourselves landed where we were a few years ago would be foolish indeed. When we know definitely the result of the Financial Agreement, I admit the position will be so altered that the whole field of taxation will need to be reviewed.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I was shocked when I saw the statement of the Minister in another place.

The PREMIER: I have not seen it, and I am not aware what the Chief Secretary told another place.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The statement was made all right.

The PREMIER: At the beginning of the session I stated that I did not propose to discuss the Financial Agreement piecemeal on the Address-in-reply or during the debate on any other matter, and I told members I thought they would be wise to refrain from such discussion until we had the Agreement and the Bill before us and the whole question could be thoroughly examined. I do not think we can get anywhere by discussing the Agreement in a piecemeal fashion.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It would be a great pity not to reserve discussion until every member had a copy of the Agreement.

The PREMIER: I think so, too. I have not copies to place before members. I had only two copies that were brought back from the conference by the Under Treasurer, and they were the copies made available to the Premiers at the conference. It is necessary to have copies printed, and I am expecting to receive them any day now. When they are received, I propose to lay a copy on the Table of the House, and copies will be available to members. The Leader of the Opposition asked me if I had a spare copy and I gave him one of the two that were in my possession.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But I did not have liberty to use it until other members had received their copies.

The PREMIER: That is so. We would not be justified in making any further reduction in taxation until we know just where it will land us.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—POLICE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [4.58] in moving the second reading said: This Bill was introduced in its present form last session, but it did not pass this House, principally

because there was not sufficient time in which to discuss it. It contains a principle with which the House will not disagree, because it has become the practice of Government departments to have appeal boards to consider appeals lodged by persons who have been punished by officers in control of departments. Such persons have a right to appeal to an independent board, but there is no such provision for members of the police force to appeal against punishments inflicted on them. When punishment is inflicted on a member of the force for misconduct or for some offence against discipline he may exercise the option of having the case reviewed by the Commissioner or he may appeal to a board. That board consists of the resident magistrate, a justice of the peace, and an officer of the department, but there is no appeal from that board. A man does not know what his punishment is going to be, and when he is punished there is no appeal from it. The matter goes through the Executive Council, the punishment is recorded, and that is all there is to say about it. It has become a well recognised principle that when Government employees are punished they shall have the right of appeal. Comparatively few State employees ever exercise that right. They only appeal when they feel they are suffering from a sense of injustice and have not received consideration at the hands of the departmental officers. They may also appeal when they feel there are some mitigating circumstances which have not been taken into consideration at the time when they were punished. Appeals to the appeal board are accepted as final both by the Government and the department concerned. It is desired that members of the police force shall enjoy the same right that is possessed by other people in the Public Service. The officers of the Railway Department have had an appeal board for at least 20 years, and it has worked satisfactorily. The principle has since been extended to other departments, until in almost every branch of the service the employees have this right of appeal. The request for this Bill has come from the Police Union. Members of that organisation think that they should be treated the same as other Government employees, and I see no reason why they should not be afforded this opportunity of appealing. Section 19 of the Act of 1892 gives to

the Commissioner the right to fine a man £10 or to imprison him for a month. In another section somewhat similar punishment can be meted out. We have reached a time in our industrial history when the right to imprison for some misdemeanour should not be vested in an officer of the Government. If an employee does not carry out his duties as he should, or is remiss in anything, the officer in control of the department has the option of dismissing him, and that should be sufficient punishment. If an employee steals, or does anything of that kind, he may be dealt with according to the criminal law. The other matter, however, refers only to offences against the regulations, such as lack of good conduct or want of discipline. It was thought necessary 20 odd years ago to have the right to imprison members of the police force in certain circumstances, but we have reached the stage when such things should no longer be possible.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They never have been imprisoned for offences against the regulations.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No, but the right is there should it be desired to put it into effect. Some foolish person might take advantage of this right, and inflict a punishment that might give rise to a great deal of discontent in the force, and do a great deal of harm.

Hon. G. Taylor: Now you are proposing to amend the Act?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: We are proposing to strike out that provision. It is proposed that the Commissioner, or the officer delegated by him, may make inquiries and get evidence on oath concerning any charge that is laid against the alleged offender. The Commissioner shall take the responsibility, within the terms of clause 4, of imposing any punishment that he considers will meet the circumstances. If, after the Commissioner has done that, the employee feels that he has been unjustly treated, or that there are circumstances that should have been considered when he was punished, he is to have the right of appeal to the appeal board that will be constituted. This is not a new principle, for we have it in other departments. It can with justice be applied to the police force, equally as much as to any other section of our Public Service. The main portions of the Bill comprise merely the machinery clauses for

the purpose of carrying into effect the provisions for the election of the board, and the manner in which it shall be constituted. It follows almost entirely the machinery employed in connection with the Railway Appeal Board, which has worked so satisfactorily for a long period of years.

Hon. G. Taylor: Is it the same Bill as that of last year?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Exactly the same. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—PERMANENT RESERVE.

In Committee.

Mr. Panton in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1, 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Price of land:

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: On the second reading I raised the question of the purpose to which this £40,000 would be devoted, and the Premier said he would give the matter consideration. What is it proposed to do with the money?

The PREMIER: I have already intimated that I do not think it would be right to pay this money into revenue. I have not definitely decided what to do with the money, but it is certainly not intended to take it into revenue. I think it ought to be paid into revenue, and appropriated to some other specific purpose afterwards. It should not go into the general revenue for the year. The money may be used for the erection of buildings on the present site of the Savings Bank, it may be used towards the completion of Parliament House, or it could be used towards the cost of commemorating the centenary of the State. There will have to be considerable expenditure from revenue during the year 1929 for the last-named purpose.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It could not be used for that unless it was spent on public buildings.

The PREMIER: If there be any legitimate objection to a substantial sum coming in as a windfall to revenue, there may also be objection to a substantial expenditure from revenue for the celebrations. That

expenditure would not be recurring. I do not know what it would amount to, for that would depend on the form that the celebrations would take. It would not be fair for one financial year to bear the fairly heavy expenditure from revenue upon these commemorations. The money could best be devoted towards the erection of buildings.

Hon. G. Taylor: On the same land?

The PREMIER: Not necessarily.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Will you put this into a trust fund and not into revenue?

The PREMIER: I undertake that it shall be appropriated to some specific purpose. It will go through revenue and be paid to a trust fund. It will not form part of the general revenue for the year.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It is wrong in principle to sell buildings and property, as we are doing now, and put the money into revenue. I shall be satisfied if this sum is paid into a trust fund, in order that later on Parliament may agree as to the manner in which it shall be allocated. After all, we are only selling land to ourselves and the proceeds cannot be looked upon as revenue. The Savings Bank is a trading concern and it must meet its obligations either by way of rent or interest on the outlay necessary to provide the accommodation required. I am content with the Premier's assurance that the money will be paid into a trust fund. I do not know that we can sell land and use the money for centenary celebrations. These will have to be arranged according to the amount of cloth we have to spare for the coat.

The Premier: If we decide to complete Parliament House as part of the centenary celebrations the money may be used towards defraying the cost of that. It will, however, have to be appropriated by Parliament to whatever purpose may be decided upon.

Mr. THOMSON: I have already indicated that it is my intention to move an amendment. We can only deal with the Bill as it is before us. It says that the price of the land and the improvements shall be £40,000, to be paid by the State Savings Bank. I look upon this project as a dangerous precedent. I have always endeavoured to do my public duty as if the money in question were my own. Surely no member of the House would sell land to himself and then claim that he was £40,000 better

off. That is what this Bill suggests. The Premier refers to this sum as a windfall. That cannot be, because the State will be paying it. It simply means charging an amount of £40,000 against the State Savings Bank, which does not come within the purview of State trading concerns, being really a public utility.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member cannot discuss whether the State Savings Bank is a trading concern.

Mr. THOMSON: It is a Government activity which enables the State to get money at three per cent., for which money the Agricultural Bank charge six per cent., plus necessary expenses. Naturally I do not for a moment doubt that the Premier will, as he has stated, pay the £40,000 into a suspense account. However, we are dealing with the Bill as it is; and the clause lays down a highly dangerous precedent. The land in question never cost the Government anything, and they cannot legitimately sell it to themselves for £40,000 and take the amount into revenue. I move an amendment—

That all words of the clause after "pounds" in line 2, be struck out, and the following inserted in lieu:—"and shall be paid by the State Savings Bank towards the cost of the erection of the new buildings on the said land."

The Premier merely said the money "might" be used for that among other purposes. I admit that the State Savings Bank should be debited with the amount as part of the working expenses. If the Government did not possess this block themselves but were buying it from a private person, they would have to pay the £40,000 and that amount would be a legitimate charge against the revenue of the State.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: But the State Savings Bank are relinquishing their present valuable site.

Mr. THOMSON: That is a phase to which I acknowledge I had not given consideration.

The CHAIRMAN: I am afraid I cannot accept the amendment. It is practically an appropriation, which the hon. member would not be in order in moving. The clause provides for the payment of the money, but not how it shall be spent. I am not prepared to accept the amendment. Perhaps the member for Katanning will desire to have the Speaker's ruling on the point.

Dissent from Chairman's Ruling.

Mr. Thomson: I regret to have to move—

That the Committee dissent from the Chairman's ruling.

[*The Speaker took the Chair.*]

The Chairman: The member for Katanning has moved an amendment to strike out all the words of Clause 3 after "pounds," in line 2, with a view to the insertion of the following words:—"and shall be paid by the State Savings Bank towards the cost of the erection of the new buildings on the said land." I have ruled the amendment out of order on the ground that it proposes an appropriation of the money to a definite purpose, which the member for Katanning is not in order in moving. The hon. member has moved to dissent from my ruling. Clause 3 of the Bill distinctly lays down that the State Savings Bank shall pay the sum of £40,000 to the Department of Lands and Surveys. I contend it is open to the Legislative Assembly to declare later that the sum shall be voted to the erection of the new buildings instead of going into the revenue of the Department of Lands and Surveys as proposed in the clause. Briefly, my view is that a private member has no authority to move an appropriation.

Mr. Thomson: My amendment does not in any way interfere with the direction in the clause that the State Savings Bank shall pay the sum of £40,000. What my amendment does propose is that instead of the £40,000 being paid by the State Savings Bank to the Department of Lands and Surveys and going into that department's revenue, it shall be utilised for the erection of the proposed new buildings. The amendment does not appropriate the money, but merely indicates in what manner, if I may use that term, it shall be spent.

The Premier: That is the trouble with the amendment.

Mr. Thomson: Hon. members laugh at my last statement. I quite expected to have that laugh raised against me. I maintain that it is within the power of the Chamber to indicate the purpose for which the £40,000 should, in our opinion, be expended. We are alleged to be the custodians of the public purse; but it seems to me that if the Chairman's ruling is upheld, there is no necessity for submitting money Bills to Parliament at all. I acknowledge that before money could actually be spent as indicated in the amend-

ment, it would have to be appropriated by the House under a Vote brought down by the Treasurer. The amendment merely indicates to the Premier that in the opinion of the Chamber the money should be utilised in a certain manner instead of passing into Consolidated Revenue as suggested by the Bill. I am not permitted to discuss the dangerous precedent that is sought to be laid down in the clause. I am prepared to admit that the Standing Orders set out that no private member may move an amendment that will mean the appropriation of revenue or the incurring of expenditure. In support of my argument, the Premier, when he introduced the Bill, clearly indicated that the object of the measure was to enable a building to be erected for the State Savings Bank. Therefore my amendment is perfectly in order.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think I require any further assistance. As a matter of truth, the Bill is for the purpose of excising a certain portion of land from a reserve, and of enabling that portion to be acquired by the State Savings Bank. The member for Katanning sought to eliminate portion of the clause that provides for the payment of money by the Savings Bank to the Lands Department and to insert a provision, the object of which was that the bank would pay the money towards the cost of the erection of a new building. That is clearly a direction, and an appropriation of money for a specific purpose. Whether such an appropriation be in a Bill or an amendment, or in any other form, it would require a Message. Therefore the amendment is out of order. The Bill simply directs the course of the purchase, neither more nor less. There is no appropriation set out in the Bill. There is land held in a reserve. It can be sold to the State Savings Bank and the Savings Bank is authorised to acquire it by the payment of money in the usual and correct way. I must uphold the ruling of the Chairman of Committees. A private member is not permitted to appropriate funds from revenue in any form.

Committee Resumed.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I move an amendment—

That after "to," in line 3, the words "the Department of Lands and Surveys" be struck out, and the following inserted:—"an account, to be called 'New Buildings Account,' in the books of the said bank.

If the amendment be accepted by the Government, it will mean that instead of £40,000 being paid by the Savings Bank to the Department of Lands and Surveys, it will be paid into the new buildings account in the books of the Savings Bank. That will avoid the objection taken that we are attempting to appropriate money. On the other hand it will prevent the money going to the revenue of the Lands Department. The Premier has indicated that he does not desire that. The money should be devoted by the bank to the erection of new buildings.

Hon. G. Taylor: Paid for by the bank to the bank!

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: Yes. Much has been said about the State Savings Bank receiving a new and valuable site, but it has to be borne in mind that the institution will relinquish a site of great value.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But the sites belong to the Government, the Savings Bank being merely a tenant.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: That is so. The bank has occupied its present central position ever since it was established, and I cannot understand why the Government require to proceed as the Premier has indicated.

The Premier: Your amendment appropriates the money for certain purposes, namely for building purposes.

The CHAIRMAN: I cannot see much difference between the amendment before the Chair and that previously moved by the member for Katanning. His amendment sought to appropriate the money for the erection of a building; the present amendment seeks to have the money paid into a building account. That means that the moneys will still have to be used for the erection of a building.

Hon. W. J. GEORGE: That cannot be done.

Hon. G. Taylor: It is absurd.

The CHAIRMAN: It is difficult to distinguish much difference between the two amendments. I rule the present amendment out of order.

Hon. W. J. GEORGE: We are talking in a circle and losing a lot of time, although information may be gleaned by some people. The Bill merely means that the Government are desirous that the State Savings Bank shall have new business premises. In effect they say to those in authority, "We cannot let the Savings Bank

have some of the land we own unless the bank pays for it. By that means the bank will have to carry its natural obligations."

The Premier: That is the only business way of doing it.

Hon. W. J. GEORGE: If the money is paid, then the balance sheet and trading account in connection with the bank will contain a debit for the interest on the money used for the erection of the building. The bank will have to pay interest on the £40,000 just as it would if the money were borrowed elsewhere. If the Government have to provide money for the bank, the necessary money must be lent under conditions that will involve the payment by the bank of sufficient to cover interest and sinking fund charges. The Bill merely provides for the sale of land and sets out that the bank shall pay for the provision of its new home. All members are agreed that a site should be purchased and paid for by the bank, but some seem nervous as to the disposition of the money. The Premier has told us more than once—and I accept his assurance—that the money will not be taken into Consolidated Revenue, although it may have to go there temporarily. He has assured us that it will not be used as ordinary revenue. Later on the Premier will have to bring a measure before the House indicating how the £40,000 is to be dealt with. I am at a loss to understand why there should be any further discussion on this point.

The Premier: Apparently some members do not accept my assurance.

Mr. ANGELO: There is one account only into which the £40,000 can properly be placed, even temporarily, and that is the Government Property Sales Fund. The money must remain there for the time being, and later on can be appropriated to whatever purpose the Government may decide.

Hon. G. Taylor: You are wrong.

The Premier: Of course he is.

Hon. G. Taylor: This is not a sale of Government property.

Mr. ANGELO: Of course it is. The land is the property of the Government and if it is sold, the money derived from the sale should be paid into the account specially created for such transactions. The Premier has told us that he is not quite sure how the money will be used; whether it would be used for the completion of Parliament

House, for the erection of a building for the State Savings Bank or, perhaps, in connection with the centenary celebrations.

The Premier: This is a joke!

Mr. ANGELO: The Government Property Sales Fund is really a trust fund, and the money placed in that fund remains there until the Government decide as to how it shall be used. Why not let the money remain in that fund for the time being? I have heard the Premier say it is doubtful whether money from the Government Property Sales Fund can be taken into Consolidated Revenue.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Of course it cannot.

The Premier: I am inclined to take advantage of the suggestion by the member for Gascoyne.

Mr. ANGELO: It cannot be taken into Consolidated Revenue except in the proper way. Every time the Premier introduces a Supply Bill he asks the sanction of Parliament for the appropriation of certain moneys from the Government Property Sales Fund before it can be applied to Consolidated Revenue. The Premier is not prepared to make a suggestion as to how he will apply the money. It is proposed that it should be put into a trust fund, and I contend that the Government Property Sales Fund is the right fund to which the money should be credited. Then it would not be possible to appropriate it without the consent of Parliament.

Mr. LAMBERT: It would be wrong to carry an amount like this to revenue. I am inclined to the belief that money of this description should be carried to a suspense account for the purchase of suitable land for other governmental functions. With the growth of the country, it will soon become necessary to purchase land on which to erect suitable administrative offices. It is a pity that opportunities are passing day by day and week by week, while the capital value of the land is incessantly increasing in the city, without the Government making any provision for securing land for administrative purposes.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is making a second reading speech on the clause.

Mr. LAMBERT: I do not think I have roamed quite as much as some members who have spoken. I hope that the Premier has at the back of his mind the utilisation of

this money for a purpose similar to that which I have suggested. Something should be done in that direction to meet the growing requirements of the city for the next half century.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I should have been wanting in my duty if I had not called attention to the fact that this money was going into revenue. The Savings Bank is a trading concern, and as such must pay its way. However, the Premier has promised that the money shall not go into revenue, and that its reallocation will be subject to a further vote of the House.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 4—agreed to.

Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—CLOSER SETTLEMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 23rd August.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [5.55]: I do not intend to oppose the second reading of the Bill. As a matter of fact I introduced a somewhat similar Bill more than once in this House. In connection with the measure we are now discussing, there are one or two matters that I consider require attention. I do not see how we can deal with conditional purchase land, which is land that is held under contract. The Minister will surely realise that if to-day we dispose of land under C.P. conditions, we should not have the right to resume it to-morrow. A man enters into a contract, and we say to him that so long as he carries out the provisions of that contract we will give him the freehold of the land. If we resume conditional purchase land and let others have it under similar conditions, it will again be subject to resumption. The great objection to a Bill of this kind is that it leaves everybody in doubt. When drafting the Bills that I submitted to Parliament, the trouble I found was that we would not resume very much, but that everyone would be fearful that his property would be resumed. When we interfere with the security of the land, we do something that is dangerous. That is an important aspect of the position. The Minister for Lands must recognise that if there is no security of tenure there will be no

settlement or progress. A man will do mighty little to his land unless he is assured of security. Land is a convenient form of security, and we do not want to interfere with it in the slightest degree. We must not interfere with it; it will be disastrous if we do. The cost of making a farm, the Minister will realise, is well beyond the means of most of those who select land. They go to the Government or to someone else for financial assistance. For that reason, too, we should not interfere with the security of the land. Of course if there is land adjacent to a railway and it is not being utilised, there will be no hardship in taking it at its proper valuation. I do not know what the Minister means by "economic value of land." If it is being used for grazing purposes, or in connection with dairying, it can be regarded as grazing or dairying land, or if it is growing potatoes it will be considered as potato land, and as such can be resumed. It would be ridiculous to say to anyone, "You must grow potatoes on that land." Go to Osborne Park and we find swamp land worth perhaps £120 an acre. That land may be growing celery and we may consider that while it is growing celery it is not being put to its most useful purpose, and that it should be growing a more valuable crop. If we declared, on that account, we would take the land, merely because it was growing celery and nothing more valuable, we would be doing wrong. We know that there is a lot of land in the South-West that is not being used to its fullest capacity, and is not giving the return per acre that should be expected of it. If we went to Brunswick to-day, we would find that Mr. Talbot, at a place called Wedderburn, was running stock on country which, if more satisfactorily developed and fertilised, might be made a successful potato farm. Mr. Rose, M.L.C., improved and fenced the property well, and to-day immense numbers of stock are being run there. I suppose the Minister is perfectly satisfied that Mr. Talbot is doing his duty in utilising the land in a proper manner, although perhaps it is not being utilised to the greatest possible economic advantage. Now let me reply to something the Minister for Lands said about the Avon Valley.

The Minister for Lands: I said nothing for myself; I merely quoted Mr. Surveyor Lefroy.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Well, you quoted as if you knew it yourself.

The Minister for Lands: Oh no.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: You said there was no other place in the State where improvements made during recent years were so few as they were in the Avon Valley. In this House many times have we discussed this question. A little over three years ago the Premier told the electors that if he were returned to power he would settle 1,500 people around Northam on land not then being utilised. Of course we all know that he has not settled so much as 1,500 goats, or even 1,500 magpies there.

The Premier: I merely quoted Mr. Surveyor Lefroy. I knew nothing about it. I did not pretend to be an authority on that land.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Very well, we know it now. However, the Premier said he would settle 1,500 people in the district.

The Premier: No, I read Mr. Surveyor Lefroy's report. That is all. Surely I am justified in accepting the report of a responsible officer of the Lands Department!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, quite justified. But that report had been discussed in this House many times before you made that speech.

The Premier: And the report had never been refuted. Of course different opinions had been expressed, but the report was never refuted.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Then I do not know what the Premier calls refutation. To establish 1,500 wheat farms would require a tremendous territory, far more than the whole of the Avon Valley. On one occasion the ex-Minister for Lands mentioned the same thing in this House.

The Premier: We did nothing but quote exactly Mr. Surveyor Lefroy's report.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I will tell the House what happened. This is a sore question with me, for I live at Northam and I know more about the district than does Mr. Surveyor Lefroy.

The Premier: That report first came to light as the result of a motion moved by one of the hon. member's supporters, the ex-member for West Perth, Mrs. Cowan.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Well, I hope we shall do justice to the people of the Avon Valley, and no longer tell the State that they are an unenterprising, slow-going, non-conforming lot of people. The ex-Minister for Lands came down to the House and said there were in the Avon Valley 2,000,000 acres of unimproved land that could still

be settled. I had the area worked out, and I found that there are not 2,000,000 acres in the whole of the Avon Valley, from the foot of the ranges to the source of the river.

Mr. Mann: Does not that report include the whole of the Wongan Hills line?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: My friend Mr. Angwin, being a very conscientious man, went back to his departmental officers and said, "What is this you have given me, showing 2,000,000 acres of unimproved land in the Avon Valley?" They said, "No, not in the Avon Valley; in the watershed of the Avon River"—which, of course, reaches as far as Menzies. Land in the Avon Valley has been settled since the very early days, and there has not been sufficient timber reserved on the farms to supply firewood. One farmer there paid over £100 last year for firewood for the engine driving his chaffcutter. Frequently the firewood for the engines on the farms has to be brought from the ranges. The Minister will find that very little timber has been left near the towns in the Avon Valley, and that a great deal of the firewood has to be brought in by train. Let us do justice by the people who have improved their land there. The Avon Valley is a very rich territory, but it does not extend very far from the river on the south-western side before it reaches the Darling Ranges. I suppose there is no other territory in the State so well improved as the Avon Valley, for some of it has been settled for over 80 years. I remember reading in a Perth newspaper that the first 25 acres cleared was cleared in 1836 by Mr. Chidlow, of Northam. So the land is thoroughly cleared and improved. Yet when my friend Mr. Angwin brought down his Bill he said it was necessary because the people of the Avon Valley were not doing their duty, that around Northam and around Toodyay they had not cleared their land. If the Bill were necessary only because in that district the land was not improved, we should be wasting public funds in having the Bill printed. Then, too, that report of Mr. Lefroy's is eight years old. Let me tell the House how it came to be made. In 1918, Mr. H. B. Lefroy being Premier, it was decided to have land within seven miles of a railway inspected. A great deal of land was classified, but of course nothing happened after that. The report was in when I became Minister for Lands in 1919. I asked Mr. Surveyor Lefroy to show me in the Avon

Valley land that could be resumed for soldier settlement. He pointed to Wilberforce, a fairly big area. It was taken up by Mr. Hamersley in the early days. He had a large family of sons, and in 1919 he was a very old man. It was perfectly certain that the estate would soon be subdivided. However, it was offered to the Government, but the board did not recommend its purchase at the price. The land has been sold for a much higher price since then. At any rate, Mr. Hamersley died and his sons shared the property. They kept some of the land and sold some of it. To-day that property is very satisfactorily improved. That was the only property of any size in the Avon Valley that could be pointed to. The Minister for Lands knows what has happened to land in his own locality, knows whether it is improved or not, and I hope he will credit me with knowing something about Northam and the Avon Valley, and believe me when I say that land there is quite as highly improved as it can be, and that in point of fact too much timber has been removed from the land in that district. However, the land there is being put to its proper use.

The Minister for Lands: That is the point. It is not the improvements. The question is, is the land being worked to its proper economic value?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I have been reading a page or two on economy, but I am hanged if I know what the Minister means by "economic value." Does he mean that the land must be used to produce the heaviest crops, such as potatoes, or the most valuable crops, such as walnuts? The land there is being put to reasonable use, and I hope the Minister will agree to the exCISION of those words "economic value." In this State, with 624,000,000 acres, and only 30 odd million acres alienated, we want the land to be used in some way; for stock if it is not being cropped, for wheat if not for potatoes, for dairying, for any reasonable purpose. The Minister for Works has put land in the South-West, previously believed to be useless, to wonderful use. The Minister for Lands smiles, but I assure him it is true. If he does not believe me, let him go down to Pinjarra and have a look at the land that has been sown with subterranean clover during the last few years. But if the Minister for Lands is going to say that because land in the South-West will grow potatoes it must all grow potatoes, I hope the House will not agree. I do not think

the Minister needs that "economic value" provision. Certainly while it remains I will not support his Bill. And I do object to everybody who speaks on this Bill depreciating the Avon Valley because of that eight-year-old report.

Hon. G. Taylor: It was never acted upon.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It could not be acted upon. I submitted this very Bill twice, but it could not apply to the Avon Valley unless that territory were put to uses other than wheat growing and sheep raising. It is not capable of growing potatoes, which are the world's greatest crop. I hope the Minister will agree that the landowners in the Avon Valley have done their duty by the State reasonably well. In this country it would be ridiculous to prove that all land must be quite satisfactorily used. It could not be done. The Treasurer would not have sufficient money to attend to it. I do not know whether the Treasurer was here when I referred to the value of land as security. It is all-important to the development of the country and the employment of men. We must not in the Bill do anything to destroy the value of land as a security.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister for Lands referred to similar Acts in force in the other States. I should like to point out that the position here with regard to improvements is very much better than it is anywhere else in Australia. Particularly does that apply to the last two years. Of the whole area of this State we have sold about 31,000,000 acres and of that over 10,000,000 acres is ringbarked, cleared or partially cleared, and much of the other land is fenced for stock and is being put to some use. Of the 31,000,000 acres grazing leases total 10,600,000 acres, or one-third of the total. The House knows that during the last few years we have sold a tremendous area of light land. It is due to the fact that wheat is bringing 5s. a bushel that light land is being sold. I believe that the price of wheat will be maintained and, if it is, a great deal more of the light land will be brought into use. A few years ago we built our railways largely from good patch to good patch; we did not build them as we should build them to-day—in a straight line. We had to take the land that could be used for the growth

of crops and build the railways to serve that land. The Premier will remember how keenly the proposed routes of railways were discussed. All that is changed to-day because of the change in the position of the world's food supply. Seven years ago we had 1,500,000 acres that had been ploughed and cultivated. To-day we have over 8,180,000 acres; in other words 3,877,000 acres of additional land has been cultivated and ploughed in the last seven years. That is much greater than the area of new land brought under the plough in all the other States of Australia put together. Remembering that we have only one-sixteenth of the population of Australia, it has not been possible to do much more. Time and again during the five years I was in office we tried to get more of the land cleared in the wheat belt, but it was useless. Our people could do no more. While I am not opposing the Bill, I should like to emphasise that the position here is not anything like analogous to that in the other States. We have sold a great deal of our land within the last few years subject to conditional purchase conditions which mean compulsory improvement. The contract is to pay certain money to do certain work. That work for the most part is being done. Naturally, too, the sale of first-class land is falling off year by year. We cannot sell land twice over. The town hall site has gone, and the same applies to much of our farming land. In the South-Western division we have 70,000,000 acres of Crown land, much of it useful for cultivation, but 40 per cent. is the maximum of cultivable land in any country. Of all the countries in the world, the only one that has 40 per cent. under cultivation is Java. Consequently, considering our population, we are not getting on badly. When we remember that the great bulk of the people live in the city and towns—the same remark applies to the whole of Australia—the sons of Martha have done pretty well. Let us compare Western Australia with the other States. New South Wales has sold 64,000,000 acres of land and leased a considerable area for pastoral purposes, but the area under crop in 1923-24 was 4,809,000 acres and there was only 18,300,000 acres of Crown land not occupied. Victoria has sold 33,000,000 acres and in 1923-24 had 4,682,000 acres under crop, while only 13,000,000 acres was still in the hands of the Crown. Queensland has sold

24,000,000 acres and in the same year had 1,000,000 acres under crop, while 96,000,000 acres was still in the hands of the Crown. South Australia has sold 14,000,000 acres. I do not know what system of leasing is in vogue in South Australia, but obviously that State has some form of leasehold that applies to a great deal of the agricultural land. Of the area sold 3,562,000 acres was under crop, and 104,000,000 acres was still in the hands of the Crown. In Western Australia we had sold up to 1923-24 a total of 27,000,000 acres and we had 2,323,000 acres under crop. Bringing our figures up to date we had sold 31,000,000 acres to last year and the total is far greater now, and we have 3,531,000 acres under crop. In proportion to land sold or leased we have a greater area, and in proportion to population we have a very much greater area under crop than has any other State. Another point to be remembered is that the other States began the work of agricultural development at least 50 years before we did; New South Wales 100 years before. Our agricultural development followed the development of the goldfields and the real development of our wheat areas is not 20 years old. Formerly the country was not served by railways and so it could not be developed for agriculture. That is a magnificent record, and I do not think we should reflect on the people of the country by asking the House to pass this Bill. Per head of the population we have a greater area of land under wheat than has any other country in the world, and we produce more bushels per head of the population than does any other place. Western Australia has about $6\frac{3}{4}$ acres under crop per head of the population and it has been increasing by at least three-quarters of an acre for years. New South Wales has only $1\frac{1}{2}$ acres, Victoria has $1\frac{3}{4}$ acres, and South Australia has about $5\frac{1}{2}$ acres per head of population under crop. Thus at this work we have beaten all the other States, and we have done our work under conditions less favourable than those they enjoyed. Much of our development has been done at a time when everything was dearer than when similar work was carried out in the other States. To-day the cost of farming is 50 per cent. greater than it used to be, due to the altered conditions and largely to the tariff. Everything is dearer, and yet we are facing this work in the way I have

described. It has been faced and made possible only by the co-operation of the State with the individual. The State and the people have co-operated in this work to an extent not dreamed of anywhere else. It is that co-operation that has made agricultural development possible. I admit there are many commodities that we must produce. There are many things to be done, but can the present population do any more? I doubt whether it can. The agriculturist is fully loaded with work. Of that there is no doubt. The harvest this year will tax the energies of all the available men of this State. Apart from wheat there are many more commodities that we should produce. We are importing two million pounds worth of foodstuffs annually that ought to be produced here. I know that that matter has been mentioned often, but it is a fact that we cannot go on paying for the importation of those foodstuffs unless we economise in some direction. Last year our imports exceeded our exports by about £3,000,000. Either we shall have to produce a great deal more wealth or become a little more economical. There is no reason why we should buy from the Eastern States foodstuffs grown on land much dearer than ours, and produced under conditions less favourable than the conditions applying to land in this State. We should make a desperate effort to overcome that difficulty. Last year we tried to pay £3,000,000 for foodstuffs, £2,500,000 for petrol and motor-cars, and about £4,000,000 for clothing our people. We are living at a rate that demands we should increase the national income. I do not wish it to go forth that the man on the land is not doing his duty. He is doing it and has been doing it for the last few years. If in other directions the work done had been equally satisfactory, all would be well. In Australia, however, the people are engaged in the building of cities and no one is much concerned about the development of the country. The city worker is protected in all that he does. The cost of his work is going up day by day and the cost of living is going up day by day, but the man who is raising produce for a living has to face competition in the world's markets or sell against produce imported for local consumption. It is only right we should see that industries are helped as much as possible. I would urge upon the Premier, and express the hope that the Minister will take

some note of it, not to disturb the securities represented in our agricultural land. Let the Government take the power suggested in the Bill without doing damage. Let them do as little harm as may be, while possessing themselves of the power they want to bring about an increase in production. It is necessary that our public utilities should pay their way. It is true that the land adjacent to our railways should be used in order that this end may be achieved, but it cannot be used in the way the Minister thinks, for this or that purpose. It must be used more or less for general purposes. As a nation we are apt to forget what our responsibilities are. The nation to which we belong comprises 65,000,000 white people, who control one-fourth of the earth's surface. It is ridiculous that the question of food supplies, for our people at any rate, should be so serious that birth-control is talked of in the Old Land, even by archbishops. It is the duty of the Old Land to assist in the peopling of the territories controlled by Great Britain. It is willing to help, and I hope as a result of its willingness to help we shall see a marked change in the development of this country. This is just as much a British country as is the land of England itself. We ought by every possible means to settle our land with British people. True, a great deal of land is still in the hands of the Crown. It is also true that these lands are not very near a railway. I suppose the poorest of the land, on the wheat belt that is near a railway has now been selected, and day by day an ever-increasing area is being taken up. We must open up new land, not to settle fresh people but to serve the additional number of people who are wanting land within our own State. Let us look at the thing fairly, whatever we do. Let us be fair to people who are doing the work of land development. There are very few large estates in Western Australia. It is a good thing to have at any rate a few large estates scattered about the country. I have in mind the fairly considerable estates that are now being used for running some special quality stock. We who travel about the country realise how important to the whole State are the good flocks, such as those possessed by the Duracks and others in the South-West. Instead of sending to the Eastern States for breeding stock, we are now, to a certain extent, relying on the State for its production. That is what I call putting the land to good

use, but I doubt whether, under this Bill, such land will be considered by the board as being properly used according to its economic value. The whole question of economic development in the wheat belt and in the South-West is such a big one, and members are afforded so many opportunities during the session of discussing it, that I need not dwell very long upon it here. The wheat belt is being developed rapidly. When a sixteenth of the population is doing more than the fifteen-sixteenths put together, the position must be considered satisfactory. Then there is the South-West, to which this Bill will apply to a certain extent more than anywhere else. That will make headway rapidly some day. Nothing that has been tried down there has failed, whether it be fruit, roots, pastures or anything else. The only trouble has been that these things have not been grown in sufficient quantities. For the first time in our history we have a butter factory that is paying its way handsomely and producing large quantities of butter. In view of the drainage schemes that are being undertaken in the South-West, it may be that the Government should have the right to resume land, drain it, and make it suitable for closer settlement. That is one of the reasons why this Bill is necessary. I do not know that I have much more to say, for I am not offering any opposition to the Bill. I hope the Minister will be reasonable, and that before he refers to the eight-year-old report on the Avon Valley he will look into the matter and be sure that he can satisfy himself. The people feel that it is more or less a reflection upon them to have the matter talked about in the way we have talked about it in this House. Many people want land in this State, particularly in the wheat belt, and there is no question about the keen demand for it. This Bill is before us for the fourth time, though not quite in the same form. We have discussed it on three occasions, and this House has approved of it. No doubt it will approve of this Bill. I can only hope that in another place it will be slightly improved, so that it may be made more acceptable to the people generally.

MR. THOMSON (Katanning) [7.52]: As indicated by the Leader of the Opposition, this is the fourth occasion on which we have had this Bill before us. During the last elections it was stated, more particularly

by the members of the Government, that the Country Party were opposed to a closer settlement Bill. There is not an atom of truth in that statement. We certainly opposed certain clauses of the Bill, and we asked that the statutory rights of those who had taken up land under the laws of the country should be preserved to them. I will quote from the platform of our party, to refute the statement that we are opposed to closer settlement. One of our planks is that we adhere to the principle of the freehold tenure of land, and that in the event of the compulsory acquirement of land, the statutory rights should be maintained. All that we endeavoured to do was to safeguard the rights and privileges of those whose land it was proposed to resume under a closer settlement scheme. It is quite apparent that there is a large demand for land in this State. It seems to me that the trouble facing the Government, is that quite a lot of our land-hungry people wish to obtain land that is close or adjacent to a railway. Many of them have no desire to do pioneering work. Whilst it is possible that a large number of people have more land than they actually require for their own use, their forefathers in years gone by took it up with the idea of providing for their families as they increased. In my district there is a considerable amount of dissatisfaction because, in the opinion of a large number of farmers, the Government have been somewhat lax in throwing up large areas of land which they maintain are eminently suitable for settlement east from Pingrup. They say that the sons of farmers in their district are not able to obtain land. There are other districts where the fathers, possessing a little more foresight, took up larger areas than they could possibly require for their own immediate use. People who are now desirous of taking up land close to railways for the purpose of closer settlement should be prepared to pay what is termed a reasonable price for it. The Leader of the Opposition when he first brought down a Bill of this kind, stated that large areas of land were not being used profitably and it was desired that those areas should be subdivided and sold for closer settlement. A similar statement has been made by the present Government. Some closer settlements have been a success. I can foresee quite a number of difficulties with respect to the question whether land is or is not being properly utilised. The Leader of the Opposition referred to the

breeding of stud stock. Would land so utilised be properly utilised according to its true economic value? That is a debatable point. There is one slight improvement in the present Bill. It is provided that one member of the board should be a practical farmer having local knowledge of the matters under inquiry for the time being, and not a member of the public service other than as a member of the board. I have no objection to the personnel of the board. Another clause provides that the board may inquire into the suitability and requirement for closer settlement of any unutilised land, and goes on to say—

The members of the board, with such assistants as may be reasonably necessary, may enter any such land, and remain thereon for such time as may be necessary to enable the board to obtain sufficient information to report to the Minister as hereinafter provided.

Land shall be deemed unutilised within the meaning of this Act if, in the opinion of the board, the land, having regard to its economic value, is not put to economic use, and its retention by the owner is a hindrance to closer settlement, and cannot be justified.

Let me instance the Swan area. That is the main dried fruits district of Western Australia. The price now being paid for unimproved land in that district is £40 an acre. When the Leader of the Opposition first brought down his group settlement scheme it was suggested that large areas should be taken up and brought under cultivation for dried fruits. If I remember rightly, it was suggested that 10,000 acres should be brought under vine cultivation. Thereupon large areas of land were immediately made available by the owners themselves, who offered the land to the Government at reasonable prices. However, the offers were not accepted. Suppose the board to be created under this measure had been in existence at that time and had decided that the lands in question should be acquired for viticultural purposes, the owners might have been able to prove conclusively to almost any practical man that the areas were being utilised to the best purpose. As to this aspect, we must not forget that the proposed board is to consist of two public servants and one practical farmer, and that therefore it is quite possible for the man with practical knowledge to be overruled by the officers of the Lands Department and the Agricultural Bank, the odds being two to one. For this reason the Bill should provide for an appeal by the owner of the land against the board's deci-

sion that it is not being adequately utilised. I hope I shall be more successful in my efforts to amend the Bill on this occasion than I have been in the past. In Committee I shall move that the following proviso be added to the clause: "Provided that any person as aforesaid may within the specified time appeal to a local court from the opinion of the board that the land is not put to reasonable use, and that its retention by the owner is a hindrance to closer settlement and can be justified, and the decision of the local court shall be final." The Country Party maintain that such an appeal is only right and equitable. The three previous closer settlement Bills did not contain such a provision. On each occasion this party sought to have that proviso inserted. In my opinion, all fair and reasonable men must agree that the amendment I have indicated is only equitable and just. If the Government propose to resume a man's land on the score of its not being fully utilised, he certainly ought to be in a position to appeal to some independent tribunal, which would hear evidence from practical farmers engaged for years past in farming similar land. After all, what do we find even on some of the most successful soldier settlements on repurchased estates? Take the Palinup Estate in my own district. That settlement has been one of the most successful soldier settlements in Western Australia; I do not think a single failure has occurred there. However, it has turned out that the individual areas are too small for what is deemed profitable production, and as a consequence some of the soldier settlers are selling out. It is true that they are selling out at a profit, but they are selling out to their neighbours. Thus the estate is reverting into larger holdings. I trust, therefore, that during the Committee stage the Government will accept the proviso I have read out. I shall not deal extensively with the Bill, which has been fully debated on three occasions already. On each of those three occasions, this party supported the second reading, as I again do now. I hope that as the Premier, after three unsuccessful attempts, still persists with the measure, the Country Party, after three unsuccessful attempts to secure various fair and reasonable amendments, may now find their persistence rewarded. The Bill provides that the board may notify a man of their intention to resume his land for closer settlement pur-

poses, but does not provide for compensation to the owner for loss occasioned to him by such notification if the board eventually should not resume the land. Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that the board, having inquired into the suitability of a certain block of ground for closer settlement, notified the owner of their intention to acquire it. Under the Bill as it stands, it would be quite within the board's power to make the owner of the land miss the opportunity of putting in his crop for the year, and then, at a later stage, to say to him, "We have changed our minds, and have decided not to take your land, and therefore you may carry on." Probably the Government would reply, "Surely it is not to be supposed for even a moment that the board would notify a man of their intention to resume his land and then not take it over." Nevertheless, the possibility I have indicated exists. Another clause which I hope the Government will accept refers to the case where an area of land, possibly a very large area, is taken over by the Government for subdivision purposes. The Bill provides that the owner may require the Government to take over the whole area, whatever its size; but I desire the insertion of a further proviso dealing with that phase. In the case of a resumed estate, the owner might wish to retain the homestead together with sufficient of the land surrounding it to ensure to him a reasonable living. In the Committee stage I shall, therefore, move the insertion of the following new clause, which has on previous occasions been advocated by this party: "The owner may retain portion of the land intended to be acquired. Notwithstanding anything in this Act to the contrary, any owner who, before a declaration is published under Section 7 that the land has been taken under this Act, may notify the board of his desire to retain a portion of the land intended to be taken sufficient for the sustenance of himself and family, and in such case he shall have the right to retain such portion as may be agreed upon between such owner and the board, or, in case an agreement is not arrived at, as shall be determined by a local court, and the decision of the local court shall be final." It will be noted that both the new clauses which I have indicated suggest reference to the local court. The object is to safeguard against expensive legislation the owner whose land it is proposed to take. I am

quite aware that a clause of the Bill provides for appeal to the Supreme Court. Such an appeal, however, means bringing expensive witnesses from the country to the metropolitan area, means the engagement of expensive lawyers, and altogether involves costs that are too heavy for the private individual to bear. We all know that the average private person is unable to stand up against the Government, who have all the finances of the State at their disposal for the purposes of legal fighting. For these reasons I contend that cases arising under closer settlement legislation should be dealt with by the local courts. In such circumstances witnesses with local knowledge would be readily available, and the resident magistrate would also have the benefit of acquaintance with local conditions. Certainly proceedings in local courts are much more economical than proceedings in the Supreme Court, which the Bill suggests. Moreover, the measure provides for appeal only as to the price to be paid for land resumed. That matter is, in the first instance, referred to an arbitration tribunal. I hope that when cases under this measure do go before such a tribunal, the gentleman with whom the decision lies will be able to give awards satisfactory to the owners. I say "the gentleman" because we know that in every arbitration there is one arbitrator for the plaintiff and one for the defendant, and that therefore the decision, in effect, rests with the umpire. Should the Bill become law, undoubtedly the Government will in 99 cases out of a hundred, be on the safe side of the fence. The price to be paid will, in the great majority of cases, be determined by the Government. True, the Bill provides for arbitration as I have indicated; but, broadly speaking, the average individual is unable and unwilling to engage in a legal contest with the Government. I know of a case still proceeding in which heavy expense has been entailed on private individuals fighting a Government department. Indeed, the case has been in progress for several years. In taxation cases, to give another illustration, scores of persons pay the few pounds involved rather than incur the expense of a contest with the Commissioner of Taxation. I maintain emphatically that in cases where privately-owned lands are resumed by the State, the owners should be entitled to fair and reasonable compensation. The previous Bills provided that a dispossessed owner should receive 10 per cent.

over and above his land valuation, and that was all the allowance that was to be made to him in respect of compulsory removal from his land and possibly his having to make a fresh start altogether. The Country Party are strongly in favour of closer settlement. We believe that land should be utilised. We even go so far as to say that there are hundreds of men who to-day, in their own opinion, utilise their lands most profitably from the standpoint of the State as well as from their own, but who, nevertheless, are not putting those lands to the best possible use. One of the great difficulties with which the Government will be faced under this measure lies in the fact that numerous people now desirous of acquiring land have no wish to go out into the backblocks and do pioneering. There are to-day people out 30, 40 and 50 miles from a railway, pioneering and blazing the track. Men who now complain that areas adjacent to the railway system are not fully utilised, forget the fact that years ago the owners of those areas went out pioneering in the same way. In due course those former pioneers obtained railway facilities. Land-seekers of the present day, who are unwilling to go out into virgin forests, exclaim, "Large areas alongside the railways are not being properly utilised, and the Government ought to resume them." I hope that if land is resumed, fair and reasonable consideration will be given to the owner from whom the property is taken. If people have carried out the laws under which they acquired the land, they should at least have that consideration. I support the second reading of the Bill, as I have on three previous occasions when Closer Settlement Bills have been before us. I make this reservation, however, that I trust the Minister will see fit to accept at least two of the amendments I have indicated.

MR. LINDSAY (Toodyay) [8.16]: This is the second occasion since I have been a member of this House that a Bill of this description has been considered. During the last Parliament, the then Minister for Lands twitted members sitting on the Opposition side of the House with having defeated a former Closer Settlement Bill. On that occasion I suggested certain amendments. I certainly think we have every right to move amendments as we think fit, provided that, in our opinion, those amendments will improve the legislation. I believe in closer settlement and

have said so on more than one occasion. I believe the Bill under discussion is necessary, although, even if passed, I doubt whether it will be made use of for years to come. I trust the Government will realise that it is a non-party measure, and treat amendments on that basis. Members of the Country Party will endeavour to assist to make the Bill a workable one, and so help the Legislative Council to accept the measure.

Mr. Panton: You are not optimistic about the Upper House!

Mr. LINDSAY: I am not. During the last election I said I believed that the last Closer Settlement Bill was lost owing to the opposition that came from the Government side of the House to reasonable amendments that we moved. During the course of my first speech in this House I said that the landowners of the State had a duty to perform, and that was, to produce. I also said that if those landowners were not prepared to produce, the Government should make them do so. The Bill before us has that object in view, to a certain extent. I will always oppose any Bill that does not provide the individual with the right of appeal against the decision of any individual officer of a department, or of even a board appointed by the Government. The Bill does not make that provision. I remember speaking on this subject two years ago, and I referred to the position that was likely to arise under a board consisting of two departmental officers and a local farmer. I drew attention to the necessity for the right of appeal and pointed out it was natural to conclude that a board constituted as I have indicated would carry out the wishes of the Government. At that stage of the discussion the "Hansard" report reads—

The Minister for Lands: How can they carry out the wishes of the Government if there is a right of appeal?

Mr. LINDSAY: The owner will have no right of appeal. Provision is made that the board shall take evidence on oath and give a decision, but an owner who considers that he is utilising his land, should have the right of appeal.

Mr. Latham: He has the right of appeal under Clause 8.

Mr. LINDSAY: I had not noticed that.

Mr. Latham: It is a very good provision for appeal.

The position is largely the same with the Bill before us. Clause 4 refers to the board that will be empowered to resume land, but

that clause does not provide any right of appeal against the decision of the board. I remember an incident a few years ago in which you, Mr. Speaker, were concerned in your professional capacity. During the court proceedings another lawyer rose and said, "I appear on behalf of the Crown." You, Mr. Speaker, also rose in the court and asked, "Who is the Crown? Magna Charta was signed years ago to protect the rights of the people." Many Bills have taken away rights from the people and I am sure you, Mr. Speaker, if you were now on the floor of the House instead of in your Chair as Speaker, would support me in the amendment I intend to move. The Bill is somewhat different from that introduced in 1924. That measure set out that in respect of any land that was resumed, 10 per cent. should be added to the valuation fixed by the Commissioner of Taxation. The Bill omits that provision. I admit that under the Public Works Act, which guides us in these transactions, a judge may award 10 per cent. compensation, but in the previous Closer Settlement Bill the payment of that 10 per cent. was made mandatory. When we disturb settlers who have fulfilled all the legal obligations during the years they have been in possession, and force them to follow some other occupations, we should provide them with a little more than is proposed in the Bill. It was not too much to give such settlers 10 per cent. in addition to the value placed upon their holdings. I have made some inquiries regarding land settlement matters to ascertain whether the areas of holdings have been increasing or decreasing. On a previous occasion, replying to an interjection by the Minister for Lands, I stated that the Government were doing as much as any other Government to make a Closer Settlement Bill necessary. I also stated that the Agricultural Bank was doing more than any private individual or private concern to make such a Bill necessary. I made those statements because those concerned seem to think that a settler must have a huge area of land in this State before he can make a success of his farming operations. The Agricultural Bank, for instance, will refuse to grant assistance to settlers unless they possess huge areas. In my opinion we should amend our land laws to make it harder for people to acquire large areas of land.

The Minister for Lands: The maximum area of cultivable land that a man can hold to-day is 1,000 acres.

Mr. LINDSAY: When the Minister tells me that, I can retort that I have sufficient experience in the practice of our land laws to say that it is easy to drive a coach and four through them. I know a man who holds considerably more than 1,000 acres of first class land in the eastern portion of my electorate, but he was forced by the Agricultural Bank to secure two blocks before the bank would grant him an advance. Each of those blocks comprises first class land. Hon. members surely know that we can take up 2,500 acres of second class land! I was pleased to read in the Press a statement made by the Surveyor General that was to the same effect as statements I have made in this House on previous occasions. He said that much of the second class land that was being taken up in the eastern districts was fully equal to the first class land in some other districts. Recently I applied to the Statistical Department for information showing the number of holdings together with their acreages in various districts. I have that information. In my electorate there are six statistical sub-districts. From the information supplied to me by the department, I find that in 1915-16 there were 237 holdings in the Goomalling district, the average area per holding being 1,596 acres. When we come to 1925-26 we find that the number of holdings have been reduced to 217, and the average area per holding increased to 1,969 acres. That tendency is disclosed practically throughout the details for the several subdivisions. In Toodyay, for instance, in 1915-16 there were 302 holdings, but 10 years later the number had been reduced to 287 holdings. On the other hand, the average acreage had increased from 1,378 to 1,586 acres. Then in Wyalcatchem 10 years ago there were 488 holdings with an average acreage of 1,073, whereas in 1925-26 the number of holdings was 465 and the average area had increased to 1,453 acres. It will be seen that the tendency is to increase the area of land held and to reduce the number of holdings. The principal reason for that is that settlers take up a reasonable area of land at the outset and after they have made progress, they take up larger areas of light land. The member for Yilgarn (Mr. Corboy) during the Address-in-reply debate,

said that after five years a settler was on his feet. My experience suggests that it is a very wide question as to when a settler is on his feet. I have never heard of any settler in the wheat belt, for instance, who was on his feet in less than 20 years. It takes a large sum of money to fully improve a holding, much more than a settler can get from financial institutions. Most of us are greedy and land hungry, which explains why many are land poor. Many have loaded themselves up with debt because they have bought someone else out, or have selected another lump of land from the Crown. It is my opinion, after I have given the matter due consideration, that in some instances it may be a fine thing for the individual and for the State as well, if those individuals I refer to are of a progressive type. At the same time it would be better, in my opinion, if we had a larger number of settlers owning and working holdings of reasonable size, than it would be to have a smaller number of settlers owning larger holdings and employing a lot of men who had not the stake in the country that the individual landowner possesses. When travelling through my electorate I have noticed in some instances that the multiplication of holdings has worked some harm to a local centre because when the original landowner leaves, his assistance is missed. Such men help districts to progress, whereas others who come after them do not show the same interest in the development of those centres. I agree with Sir Horace Plunkett in the statement, true now as it was when Aristotle first uttered the sentiment, that a country where the preponderance of the people were husbandmen or men of small fortunes, would be governed by the law. For that reason I am convinced that there should be a limitation upon the holdings that can be selected from the Crown. I believe they should be smaller than they are to-day. Always we will find men who will take up Crown lands and fail to succeed, whereas others make good. We then find that the good men buy the bad men out, and no matter what we may do, we will find land held in large holdings. While, generally, speaking, I approve of the Bill, I intend to move an amendment. If that suggested by the member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson) is not agreed to, I will move one that I have drafted ready to place on the Notice Paper. As I was told in 1924 that provision for an appeal was included in the Closer Settlement Bill that was under discussion then, I looked for some such right in the Bill

before us. I find there is a right of appeal but it relates to the subdivision of holdings, and not against decisions of the board regarding the acquisition of land. The board is to consist of two departmental officers and a farmer having local knowledge. The inclusion of the last-mentioned serves to indicate that he will not be a permanent member of the board. There is no right of appeal against the decisions of such a board. Even the right of appeal against subdivision is to be to a judge of the Supreme Court. Such a course is likely to prove rather expensive and not many people will avail themselves of that opportunity. The right of appeal against the decisions of the board regarding the compulsory acquisition of land should be given to the owner. I hope the Minister for Lands will agree to amend the clause slightly, so as to give us an opportunity to allow our men to appeal. The Minister should agree to go through Clause 4 and see whether it is not possible for his party to assist us in making the Bill a much more workable one than it is at present.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [8.30]: I hope that, subject to slight amendments, the measure will pass the House. There is no need for one to say much upon it, for this is the fourth time a measure to bring about closer settlement has been before us. The Leader of the Opposition, when Premier, brought down a Bill on two occasions, and in 1924 Mr. Angwin, the then Minister for Lands, brought down a similar measure. It is true there is something in the nature of a mandate that the House should pass a Closer Settlement Bill, and I trust that on this occasion the Bill will be enacted. The arguments in favour of a measure to bring about closer settlement and give those who require land an opportunity to get it, are a very old story indeed. The land is urgently needed. Our railways are working under great disabilities because so much land that should be brought under the plough remains idle. That land, by virtue of the inactivity or the wrong view of its owners, is not being properly used, and consequently the owners are not doing their duty by the country. Nobody would advocate confiscation, but there would be very few who would not support a measure that would have the effect of forcing into use those immense areas of country throughout the wheat belt and elsewhere at present lying idle. I will not attempt to say what

area a farmer requires in order to secure a living. Those qualified to express an opinion say that a thousand acres of reasonably good land is sufficient. Whatever the area should be can best be decided by the board to be appointed. The board the Minister has in mind is, I think, the right class of board. One member is required to have local knowledge. I find it a little difficult to understand how one man can be expected to have local knowledge of all the land that will come under the purview of the board. However, no doubt that has been carefully considered.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: He will not be the same man in different districts.

MR. SAMPSON: Well, that makes the matter clear; that member of the board will be varied from time to time. I welcome the Bill, and I hope that as a result of it there will be on the statute book within a short period a measure that will have the effect of forcing unused land into use. Most of us can remember the wonderful work the late Mr. J. C. Morrison put up in respect of the principle contained in this measure. I am convinced that should the Bill be successful the result will be to the advantage of every person in the State; for a measure that is beneficial in that it will force unused land into use must mean an added degree of prosperity to all, while to the Railway Department it will be of especial value. I will support the second reading.

MR. MANN (Perth) [8.35]: As a member of the New Settlers' League, I know the League is constantly being brought into touch with large numbers of applicants for land, men from within the State, men from the other States and men from various parts of the world, even so far away as South America. The New Settlers' League are daily receiving letters from people desirous of settling on the land in Western Australia. Then we have a very large number of migrants who have passed through the League and served their apprenticeship, so to speak, in that they have been working on farms for several years. They also are desirous of getting land for themselves. If the Government were able to cut up many large estates and put 1,000 blocks of land on the market next week, they would have as many applicants for those blocks. I have here a leading article from a provincial paper published in Victoria. It deals with

the cutting up of estates in the Riverina country. The Government of New South Wales, seeing the great necessity for subdividing the estates and realising that the farm produce from that locality could not be taken to Sydney, have entered into an agreement with the Government of Victoria to construct railway lines from Victoria into the territory of New South Wales. Under that agreement Victoria is to build five lines into New South Wales, tapping the Riverina country. This article was written on the occasion of the opening of a line from Moama to Balranald, a distance of 160 miles. Spoken of in this article is one estate of 360,000 acres, another of 188,000 acres and a third of 87,000 acres. Those estates were cut up into farms of 1,200 acres and sold, the average price being £5,447 per farm of 1,255 acres. There were buyers for all those blocks just as soon as they were cut up. There is competition for settlers in all the States of the Commonwealth. The settlers are available. It occurs to me that when people with money are available, it is our job to make provision for them in Western Australia, to compete with New South Wales in their land scheme and get some of the people with money as well as our own people who have not the necessary money and so will have to be financed by our Agricultural Bank. It is as well the land should be settled, so as to increase our agricultural produce and overtake our deficit of trade. Returns for the year ended 30th June last show just on £3,000,000 on the wrong side. There is really no other way of overtaking that deficit than by increasing our primary products. For that reason I will support the Bill, and I hope it will pass.

MR. BROWN (Pingelly) [8.39]: I often wonder whether there is any necessity for the Bill at the present juncture, and what is really the intention of the Government. If there are large areas of arable land in Western Australia not being used to the best purpose, or being held for speculative reasons, it is only right that land should be acquired by the Government and put to better use. But we have to consider the conditions under which we are working. Western Australia is practically a new country and we still have millions of acres of virgin land to be settled. Let me speak of a district with which I am intimately acquainted, having been to and fro in it for 30 odd years. I have heard

the Premier say there are thousands of acres unutilised in that district. Personally, I think every acre from Spencer's Brook to Wagin is being used to its best purpose.

Mr. Mann: They thought that in New South Wales, but they are making better use of their land now.

Mr. BROWN: I will come to New South Wales presently. Any practical farmer of Western Australia will tell you that along the Great Southern nothing less than 1,000 acres is of any use to one going in for mixed farming, although possibly one engaged in intense culture could make a living off 500 acres. But as time goes on the land becomes wheat-sick, and any practical farmer of Western Australia knows that the land must then have a long spell. It is quite possible that a man going through such an area and seeing hundreds of acres of cleared land not producing cereals, would say the land was not being put to its best purpose. But a practical man would run sheep on that land, for he knows how best to make the farm pay. It is proposed to give a great deal of power to the board to be appointed. Personally, I would rather see the Lands Purchase Act in operation. Under that Act, if in the opinion of the Government an estate ought to be repurchased, it is repurchased on its merits. But it seems to me there is a certain amount of confiscation attaching to the Closer Settlement Bill.

The Minister for Lands: Oh, no.

Mr. BROWN: I can come to no other conclusion than that is the intention of the Government to burst up a number of large estates because they are not being used to the best purpose. Within 50 miles of Perth I could show members miles of idle country adjacent to a railway. But what is that land suitable for? If it is held by individuals I think we should have power to put an unimproved tax on it when it is being utilised for the best purpose. If that land were all of good arable character, it would have been put into cultivation long ago. The crux of the Bill is in Clause 3, prescribing that land shall be deemed unutilised if in the opinion of the board the land, having regard to its economic value, is not being put to the best economic use. A great deal rests with the personnel of the board. If the board is composed of practical men I think we can all agree that their decisions are likely to be correct; but we shall have to be very careful in appointing the board, because

grave mistakes might be made. If they are not practical men, they will say the land is not being used for its best purposes even though the owner has used it as the board would have him use it, and found that he was growing, say, wheat at a loss. I can take members to land where practical men have been growing wheat and have relinquished it, having found from practical experience that they can make a better living by using the land for sheep. That means, of course, that they will leave the ground out for four years, putting in a crop every fourth year and feeding it down. They have discovered how to make that land pay. So we must be very careful in deciding upon unimproved land within the meaning of the Act. The amendment proposed by the member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) to give the right of appeal against the decisions of the board is only reasonable. It would be altogether unjust for the board to compel a man to sell his land without any right of appeal. That would not be British fair play. I should like to know whether the board will have the power to acquire the whole of the land. A man might be occupying a homestead in which his father lived before him, and it would be very unjust if the board could acquire the whole of the land on the score that the occupier was not using it. Would it be possible for such a man to retain a certain proportion of his land? It is only right that he should be able to do so. Even if he were paid for his holding, he would be under the necessity of acquiring land elsewhere. A couple of months ago I had an opportunity to visit one of the richest parts of Victoria, namely the Goulbourn Valley. Land there is worth £14 or £15 an acre, and I found that there was a smaller population on that rich land than there was 30 odd years ago when I left it. I found that small men were selling out to larger men and that large holdings were becoming the order of the day. Victoria had no alternative to adopting closer settlement legislation because she had to settle her people. All her virgin country had been taken up, and there was no alternative to buying up large estates and buying them at very high prices. Victoria has the advantage of possessing perhaps richer soil than we have; that State has large rivers and can undertake irrigation works, which we cannot do. In New South Wales large areas of land were held under lease by the squatters, and when the leases expired the land

was thrown open for selection, with the result that millions of bags of wheat are now produced in districts that formerly were only a sheepwalk. In that instance the resumption for closer settlement may have been justified, but when we consider our land, the variety of soils and the conditions generally obtaining here, it behoves us to proceed cautiously. I should be inclined to favour the settlement of virgin country before undertaking closer settlement on a large scale. I have been informed that in certain districts, more particularly in the South-West, there are some very large estates. Still, the Government should be careful. We have had experience of settling people in the South-West. I cannot speak from knowledge of the Midland country, but I have been informed that some large estates exist there. I believe that is good cereal country. If there are thousands of acres in that part of the State not being put to proper use, good results might accrue from passing the Bill. I am not opposed to the Bill, but I urge the Government to be careful and not run away with the idea that we have millions of acres of good land that are not being utilised to the best advantage. I should like to know how the board will make their investigations. Will they act on their own judgment; will they be instructed to proceed to certain localities, or will they be empowered to traverse the whole of the country and determine who is utilising his land, and who is not? If they are given such power, some big mistakes will probably be made. When the Bill reaches the Committee stage I hope the Government will accept a few amendments from this side of the House designed to make the measure more workable. If there are large areas of land suitable for cereal growing and not being fully utilised, it would be to the advantage of the State to bring such land into use. As regards the land along the Great Southern railway, however, let me sound a note of warning. Down there the Government will not find millions of acres of land suitable for cereal growing and utilised only for sheep-walks. In most holdings there is a certain proportion of waste land. Between Spencer's Brook and Beverley it is surprising what an extent of rocky, hilly country exists that is not fit for cultivation.

Mr. Griffiths: Stony ridges fit only for sheep.

Mr. BROWN: Yes. The holders of that land know its best use and are using it accordingly. Further down the line there is

the flat country where the rainfall is very heavy. The holders of that land know that if it were put under cultivation the crop would not be payable. A man does not sow a crop merely for the fun of it; he does so in order to make a profit. His experience teaches him what the land is fit for. The board, however, might argue that out of a holding of 4,000 or 5,000 acres the owner has only 200 or 300 acres under crop, overlooking the fact that a large proportion of the holding is useful perhaps only for sheep.

The Premier: The board would not touch such land.

Mr. BROWN: The Premier will not find much rich arable country along the Great Southern railway that is not being used to the best advantage.

The Premier: We have not the Great Southern specially in mind.

Mr. Thomson: Or the Avon Valley.

Mr. BROWN: I have heard the Premier speak of the Avon Valley. I have heard him say that the unimproved value of the land there is as high as £6 per acre.

Hon. G. Taylor: That was an election speech.

Mr. BROWN: I do not know about that.

Mr. Griffiths: Or at a banquet.

Mr. BROWN: A practical man has only to look at the land being farmed at Muresk College to say that it will not produce three bushels of wheat to the acre. The ground that was put under crop this year is worked out and requires a long spell.

The Premier: Long service leave?

Mr. BROWN: I am satisfied that the crop there will not produce more than three to five bushels of wheat to the acre.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: It must need some monkey gland.

The Premier: Would you run sheep on it?

Mr. BROWN: Yes, and that would restore it for cereal growing.

The Premier: That is the right thing.

Mr. BROWN: But the board would force people to sell their holdings, and the Government would probably put settlers on such land and they, too, would make a failure of it.

The Premier: Oh, no!

Mr. BROWN: It is possible.

The Premier: You assume that everything that is foolish will be done.

Mr. BROWN: Not at all, but the Government would never have introduced such a Bill if they had not had an idea there were millions of acres of land that could be

used to better purpose. I want to know where the land is.

The Premier: Round about the country.

The Minister for Mines: Some of it around Pingelly.

Mr. BROWN: No, it is not in the Pingelly district. Out from Katanning there may be some large estates, but some of our most successful sheep farmers are living down there, and I believe that every acre of the land they hold is being utilised to the best advantage. Those men know what they are doing; they have lifelong experience of the land and understand its capabilities.

Mr. Mann: Could the Premier exempt the Great Southern?

The Premier: The hon. member should move to have it exempted.

Mr. BROWN: I do not ask that. If practical men are appointed to the board they will bear out all I have said regarding the Great Southern district.

The Premier: Then the Bill will not apply to the Great Southern.

Mr. BROWN: If that is so, where will the Government get the land?

The Premier: Oh, up the other line.

Mr. BROWN: I do not think they will get any agricultural land in the South-West. There is a certain area of land held by the Midland Railway Company, but I do not know whether it is intended to resume that.

The Premier: The Bill will not apply to that.

Mr. BROWN: When we consider the area of virgin country, members must realise that it would be well to push railways into those areas and make the land available for settlement as soon as possible. When Western Australia has a population of half a million or a million, it will be time enough to talk about a closer settlement Bill.

The Premier: But I thought you were supporting the Bill. It is not very enthusiastic support that you are giving it.

Mr. BROWN: I wish to sound a note of warning and I hold that I know what I am talking about. I have made many inspections for the Agricultural Bank and I have valued every holding in my road board district. I know what the land is suitable for, and I know what I, as a practical man, would use it for. After pioneering in Victoria and again in Western Australia I

claim to have some knowledge of the quality of our land. I am certainly enthusiastic about the quality of our land, and I think there is a wonderful future before this State. Our land generally is patchy, but we have tremendous areas of good land. The light land in the dry areas will produce good payable crops of wheat, but unfortunately we cannot get the Agricultural Bank trustees to realise that. Unless a settler has a certain proportion of first-class land in his holding, the Agricultural Bank will not grant him an advance.

Mr. Mann: Other banks will.

Mr. BROWN: Money at present is very tight and I think it is difficult to get an advance from them. At the same time, the associated banks as well as the Agricultural Bank, are doing their share to assist in the development of this State.

Mr. Mann: Hear, hear!

Mr. BROWN: The fact of large banking concerns starting business here shows their faith in the State, and when the Agricultural Bank drop the settlers, the other banks grant them advances. I sincerely hope that the Government will accept the few amendments that will be moved from this side of the House.

MR. LATHAM (York) [8.58]: There is no doubt that the Premier introduced this measure with a good deal of confidence. It is a Bill that has been put up by the parties on both sides of the House—by the present Opposition when they occupied the Treasury benches and, on two occasions, I believe, by the present Government. We should have a Bill of this kind on the statute-book, but I doubt very much whether such a measure would be brought into great use for a considerable time to come. I only wish it were true that we had millions of acres of unused land in the Avon Valley. If we had, what a wonderfully rich country it would be. We know that the amount of wealth being produced there to-day is enormous, and if we had another 2½ million acres it would be indeed a wonderful country. There would be very little need to go any further for development for some years to come. If we provide costly utilities we should compel people to use them. It is not fair that the land should lie idle. This country has spent a lot of money in the making of roads and the provision of water

supplies, etc., and it is only right that the land served by these utilities should be used. A great responsibility will be thrown upon the board to decide what land is suitable for closer settlement. No doubt the board will not always give satisfaction. I do not know whether the right of appeal to the Supreme Court will be a great advantage. It is a costly thing to approach the Supreme Court, and possibly even then a satisfactory judgment would not be obtained. A certain amount of protection will be given to the landholders if a farmer with local knowledge is appointed to the board. I refer to the holders of large areas. One may look at a property at a certain time of the year, and think that it will grow cereals at any time. In the winter months, however, it is apparent that it is only a sheep-raising proposition. The Government are not likely to take possession of sheep runs. Most of these areas are producing more wealth by raising stud flocks and fat lambs than if they were used in any other way. I am not concerned about that. What I am concerned about is that, when the board does function, we shall not have the same events occurring as have occurred before. If we look at the Loan Acts of past years, we will find that certain properties were repurchased in such districts as Mt. Hardie, Gwambygine, Cold Harbour, and one or two other places. I have been informed that one of these properties has been repurchased twice, and that to-day all are practically in the hands of one man. It is very little use having land laws upon the statute-book unless we prevent people from buying large properties. That is where the trouble comes in. The member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) said that people wanted to acquire more land, and that they had no desire to keep their money in the banks. They were looking for the best investments and desired to buy another piece of land. In a little while some people acquire so much land that they cannot put it all to the best use. They make sufficient out of it to suit their own requirements, without putting it to the use it would be put to if a greater number of people were settled upon it. I hope that some day we shall be able to solve that problem. It is a dangerous thing to interfere with the transfer of land.

Mr. Mann: You would have to alter human nature.

Mr. LATHAM: Land represents the people's security. If they are permitted to purchase adjoining holdings alongside existing railways, we shall have the problem of big estates continually with us. It speaks well for the lands of our State that people have been able to amass sufficient wealth to enable them to purchase properties at big figures. If any properties are purchased along the Avon valley in my district, the purchasers must expect to pay at least £12 an acre for them. That is the price at which they are changing hands to-day. I do not know of any settler in my district who, if his land could be subdivided and he could make a living off the other half, would not be prepared that this should be done. The land, however, cannot be held in very small areas. A great deal of the land in that area is valuable because of its close proximity to the city, and because of its richness in production. I hope the Bill will receive a better fate in another place than it met with on previous occasions. When it was introduced by the Leader of the Opposition it met with the fate experienced by the Bills brought down by the present Government. If it will assist to provide more land for our people and greater earnings for our public utilities, which have been provided at such great cost to the State, I hope the Bill will become law. Money will be required with which to purchase the estates. When they are repurchased, they will have to be pretty heavily loaded. It will be necessary for the settlers to have a good deal of capital of their own before they can acquire any of these properties under a Closer Settlement Bill. The Government will be unable to settle men who are without capital, for if they do they will probably go under. Those who take up these areas must be willing to invest their own money in them if they wish to have any hope of success. I support the second reading of the Bill, with minor amendments which I will discuss when we reach the Committee stage. I hope the Bill will become a serviceable measure and tend to the best possible utilisation of our lands.

MR. C. P. WANSBROUGH (Beverley) [9.8]: I would not have risen to speak on the second reading of the Bill but for the fact that the Minister, when introducing it, had, as the Mecca of his dreams, the Avon valley. He even mentioned

the Pingelly, Beverley, York, Northam and Toodyay districts. Beverley is in my district. I do not know of any big estates there that would be affected by the Bill. I believe the information the Minister gave to the House was old. It was compiled by Surveyor Lefroy in bygone days, when there were big estates in close proximity to the railways within the Avon valley. No doubt the proposition put up by the Government some three years ago was a factor that tended to the breaking up of these estates. To-day, however, the position is vastly different. Much of the land in the Avon valley which the Minister sees from the windows of the train, is not fit for any purpose other than sheep raising, for which it is now being used. Mixed farming in the Avon valley is the most profitable way of utilising the land. I say emphatically that much of the land the Minister has in view in these areas is producing more wealth by means of wool and mutton than it could produce under any other form of agriculture. I would sound a note of warning with respect to land values. Much of the land in the Avon valley, particularly the older settled portions, is valued at something like £10 or £12 an acre. For closer settlement purposes, that land would be too highly capitalised, and no ordinary settler could make a success upon it.

Mr. Mann: Is it worth while holding land valued at £12 an acre for sheep raising only?

Mr. WANSBROUGH: It is not held exclusively for that purpose, nor is it held in big areas. What does the Minister consider is a fair area for a man engaged in mixed farming in this particular district? He said he had no desire to interfere with land that is being utilised in a reasonable way. I am not prepared to trust any board nominated by the Minister, or any other body of men who constitute the Government of Western Australia. I am not prepared to trust them to say what is a reasonable method by which land can be used in these areas. There are many ways of using it, and people hold diverse opinions as to the best method of cultivating it and of putting it to use. No one is more qualified to put it to good use than the present holders. The Minister will rely upon the board to supply him with the necessary information, but we know that the board will be under his dictation.

The Minister for Lands: If so you ought to feel perfectly safe.

Mr. C. P. WANSBROUGH: I say without fear of contradiction that the board will be dominated by the Minister. Although a certain amount of protection will be afforded to us by having a nominee of our own upon the board, we shall have only one voice there and that will be a voice crying in the wilderness. It would be better if the Government faced the problem of obtaining more land settlement purposes by opening up new areas, rather than by introducing harassing and disturbing legislation of this character. The Bill will have the effect of limiting the financial assistance that is rendered to settlers in these areas, because no one will know what the intentions of the Government are. Contrary to the opinion expressed by the member for York, I hope the Bill does not pass, and I am relying upon another place to throw it out.

The Premier: Your leader says that your policy and platform stand for this.

Mr. C. P. WANSBROUGH: They do not stand for confiscation.

Mr. Latham: I object to that.

Mr. Lindsay: It is not confiscation.

The Premier: You are denying your leader. You know what happened to another person when he denied his leader. You are breaking your own platform.

Mr. C. P. WANSBROUGH: I am breaking nothing, and I care not if I stand alone.

Mr. Lutey: You will be carpeted for that.

The Premier: You had better read up your own platform and policy.

Mr. C. P. WANSBROUGH: We shall not know what land, in the opinion of the board, is properly utilised from the point of view of its economic value. What does the Minister mean when he refers to unutilised land and to its economic value?

The Premier: Some of the land around Beverley.

Mr. C. P. WANSBROUGH: He cannot refer to land around Beverley for closer settlement because of the high values attached to it. The Government are faced with failure from that point of view, just as they were faced with failure with regard to the groups. In actual fact, if they had established the Agricultural College in my district, they would have had more to show for their outlay. It is a fact that some of the older established properties are not producing as much in the way of cereals as they have done in the past. I am not decrying the values of these lands when I say that. The older settled areas are confronted with problems which

the newer areas escape. Many of the old holdings that were taken up 60 or 80 years ago are still in the hands of the original families. Some of them may not be up to 5,000 or 6,000 acres in extent, but in the majority of cases the head of the family has sons who are wanting land, and because of that he is endeavouring to buy still more land. Some ten years ago there were 30 members of the Primary Producers' Association in my immediate locality, but to-day there are only 14.

The Premier: That is because they are tired of the Association.

Mr. C. P. WANSBROUGH: Nothing of the sort. There are no men outside the Association in my immediate vicinity. It is because the holdings were too small that they were merged into the present holdings, with the result that the original settlers have moved on.

Mr. Lindsay: No sensible farmer is outside the Primary Producers' Association.

The Premier: There must be a lot without sense, because many of them are not inside it.

Mr. C. P. WANSBROUGH: It is no use talking of areas that are smaller than 2,000 acres. That is little enough in my district to enable a man to carry on mixed farming operations. I hope that another place will either knock this Bill into shape, or throw it out altogether.

MR. ANGELO (Gaseoyne) [9.15]: I have always been of the opinion that a person should be allowed to hold as much land as he can possibly make full use of, complying with the Government's desire that land should produce as much as is practicable. Of course time must be allowed to some men in order that they may make full use of their land, and the Bill provides that proper consideration shall be extended to such people. I have, however, always been extremely jealous of anyone holding even an acre of land without making full use of it, without intending to make full use of it, simply waiting for the value to rise. I welcome the Bill, but I consider that the whole success or failure of it depends upon the personnel of the board. The board must be completely outside political control, and absolutely unbiassed in every way. Instead of two members being Government officials, I should like to see one Government official, one farmer, and one man who is accustomed to finances as well as to land—and we ought to be able to get a man with

those qualifications. The man I have in view is one who understands securities, who is possibly an ex-banker. I repeat, it is highly necessary to have on the board a man who understands finance as well as land. The Government official on the board will understand land, and of course the farmer on the board will understand land; and as regards the third member, who should moreover be chairman of the board, a capacity of assimilating evidence and of valuing securities is, to my mind, essential. Having two members of the board dissociated from the Public Service will take away every suggestion of political control. Therefore I desire to see the personnel of the board altered in the direction I have suggested.

MR. J. H. SMITH (Nelson) [9.17]: I support the second reading, knowing that the people of Western Australia consider, as I do, that the Bill is long overdue. If members move amendments intended to promote the passage of the measure through another place, the Government would be wise to accept them. There has been no direct opposition to the measure here, though a few notes of criticism have been sounded. The Minister for Lands stated that the man who utilises his land to the best advantage, irrespective of what its area may be, will not be interfered with, and that the measure aims only at bringing into productivity land to-day lying idle.

Mr. Lindsay: No, not this Bill.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Yes. The Minister expressed himself to that effect in moving the second reading. I know of land in the southern and south-western portions of the State which is capable of producing 10 or 12 times more wealth than it yields at present. All that is needed is clearing, top-dressing, and cultivating. The statement of the member for Pingelly (Mr. Brown) that the Great Southern lands are being utilised to their fullest capacity, must be taken with a grain of salt. The hon. member, in making his case, declared that much land in the Great Southern district had been cropped year after year and thus had run out. If the farmers in the district had used the various methods of grazing, fallowing, and running sheep, the results would have been better. The Minister does not desire that land suitable for sheep-grazing should be forcibly converted into wheat-growing land.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: That will rest with the board.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: If the board should prove unreasonable, this legislation can always come before Parliament again. I should like to see the board constituted not of two civil servants and a farmer, but of two outsiders and one civil servant, as suggested by the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo). In the event of the board not functioning satisfactorily, landholders themselves, and indeed the community in general, will speedily induce whatever Government may be in power to bring in legislation amending this measure. I hope the Minister will not be headstrong in regard to the Bill, which should not be made a party measure. I repeat that legislation of this kind is long overdue, and I trust that the Minister will accept any amendments which will improve the chances of the measure being passed by another place.

MR. GRIFFITHS (Avon) [9.21]: I rise more particularly to state expressly that I support the Bill and that I believe in closer settlement legislation. At the same time I recognise that certain matters already referred to by hon. members should receive attention in Committee. This is the fourth time a Closer Settlement Bill has been introduced. Three times has such a measure been passed here; twice it was rejected by another place, and once it was practically dropped. I hope the result will be better this time.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: No.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The member for Beverley (Mr. C. P. Wansbrough) says he does not. The suggestion that the Avon Valley has millions of acres available for settlement should be borne well in mind when the matter comes up for consideration by the board to be appointed under the Bill. Personally, I have not too much time for boards. There seem to be various boards appointed, chiefly from Government officials, to place harassing conditions on the shoulders of the people most concerned. If the Peel Estate affords a fair average sample of closer settlement, I can only hope that the board under this measure will be able to devise a form of settlement that will prove more successful. A previous speaker mentioned that what is required is not so much the breaking-up of large estates, as to check the growing tendency of men who have land-hunger to swallow up the smaller men around them and thus form large estates. The member for Perth (Mr. Mann) says, "Buy them out again"; but that will be travelling in a vicious circle.

Mr. Corboy: Provided they are using their land to the full, what is wrong?

Hon. G. Taylor: That is for the board to say.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: As to the question of deciding whether land is being put to the full economic use, there will be much argument. On this aspect a man should not be forced to go to the Supreme Court for a decision whether or not he has received a fair deal. The proposal to amend the Bill in that respect should be favourably considered by the Minister. If the measure goes to the Upper House without some such amendment, it will meet with the same fate as its predecessors. Some years ago I made an extensive tour through the State, travelling some 3,000 miles. Before setting out I had the idea, partly because of Mr. Surveyor Lefroy's report, that alongside the railway system there were millions of acres of unused land held in large estates. I went through the Avon Valley, which has been referred to by members to-night. One finds good land in the flats alongside the Avon River, but at the back of those flats there are big stony hills fit only for sheep. Back of Spencer's Brook, where Muresk farm is situated to-day, there is a large area of land held by Mr. Sam Copley, comprising about 20,000 acres. I thought that there was something wrong in the situation, and that the estate ought to be broken up. As the result of investigation, however, I found that a good deal of the estate was poor white gum country, though with good values here and there. If the estate is to be broken up, the valleys will be suitable only for fruit-growing in small areas; and having regard to the present parlous state of the fruit industry the ranges do not offer much inducement for closer settlement. The member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson) spoke of the Palinup estate. There, again, we have a case of the stronger soldier settlers gradually acquiring the holdings of the weaker settlers and thus building up large estates. I acknowledge, however, that so far the Palinup soldier settlement has proved successful. The member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) referred to the Agricultural Bank's methods in granting loans on first class lands. I know of a district in which, so as to get the requisite 640 acres of first-class land, a block had to comprise nearly 5,000 acres. I believe there are nine blocks of this size on one side of the railway route, and eight or nine of about

4,000 acres on the other. An hon. member asked how the local man on the board could be expected to judge the values of the numerous classes of country Western Australia has. Though various large estates in Western Australia might possibly with advantage be subdivided, I contend that no one man could judge correctly the economic value or the best use of all the different kinds of soil contained in them. The man whose land is being resumed should certainly be given the right of appeal, and should not be forced to go to the Supreme Court for a decision as to whether the Government are giving him a fair deal. Supreme Court proceedings are too costly.

The Minister for Lands: The owner does not go to the Supreme Court; he goes before an arbitration tribunal.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Possibly the Minister is right, but I read the Bill as I have stated. There is another aspect, hitherto mentioned only by the member for Pingelly (Mr. Brown). I refer to the case of the man who may have been 40 or 50 years on his land, or whose father may have taken it up half a century before him. The Bill does not grant him any sort of right to retain, if only for sentimental reasons, part of the family estate. That is an aspect which should receive the Minister's consideration before the Bill emerges from Committee. Such a measure as this may be all right, but I fail to see that for the present it will be put to much use. The second reading has my support.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. M. F. Troy—Mount Magnet—in reply) [9.30]: I do not propose to speak at any length in reply to the debate, because most hon. members have indicated their support of the measure. I do not anticipate much opposition. Mention was made of several proposed amendments but in all probability hon. members intend to move in that direction merely in order to exercise their right of opposition.

Mr. Lindsay: That is not so with me.

Mr. Thomson: No, we have persistently advocated what we seek to achieve.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Very little has been said in opposition to the Bill. I know that some hon. members like to feel that they have issued a note of warning as to the possibilities ahead of legislation, and to prophesy disastrous results. On the other hand, they are not entitled to say that any

body of men who may constitute the Closer Settlement Board and the Government who will be behind the board, will be more unreasonable than any similar number of men in this House. We are dealing with several boards to-day and we have not found them unreasonable. The Industries Assistance Board is not unreasonable. In my opinion it has been more than reasonable, for it has given consideration beyond all reason to many of its clients. The Agricultural Bank has been reasonable. Some hon. members claim that it is too conservative, but they should have regard to the magnificent work it has done in Western Australia. I do not know of any body of men to whom Western Australia owes more than to the trustees of the Agricultural Bank for their discretion and wise administration.

Hon. G. Taylor: They have been fair to everyone.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have had dealings with the bank and therefore speak from personal experience. I have represented many clients of the bank and I do not know of one instance in which the trustees were not fair and generous. Of course from time to time we hear people declaring what ought to be done, but I have no hesitation in saying, after my experience of over 23 years spent in political life in this country, that the bank has proved itself a very fair institution. Hon. members are not justified in endeavouring to scare their constituents by discussions of the character they have indulged in this evening. The board will consist of a responsible officer of the Lands Department and another from the Agricultural Bank, the latter being specially trained in work of the description necessary under the Bill.

Mr. Thomson: Still, their views will be coloured to a certain extent by the policy of a Government.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The other member will be a practical farmer having knowledge of the locality where a holding is to be resumed. Why is there any objection to that?

Mr. Lindsay: Why not give the land owner the right of appeal?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He has the right of appeal.

Mr. Lindsay: Where is the right of appeal against the decisions of the board?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Could anything be more ridiculous?

Mr. Lindsay: Why? The Minister for Justice introduced a Bill to-day to give the very right to the police that we ask for now.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If an individual desires to obstruct the work of the board, the hon. member would give that opportunity.

Mr. Thomson: Well, why give the police that right of appeal?

Mr. Lindsay: Which is all that we ask for!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Have hon. members had any experience in the past that justifies them in their suspicions regarding the Closer Settlement Board?

Mr. Thomson: We certainly have, regarding the resumption of land.

The Minister for Mines: And the Government had some sorry experiences too.

Mr. Thomson: Those were with the shrewdies.

The Minister for Mines: The State has paid tens of thousands of pounds more for land that has been resumed than it should have been called upon to pay.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Experience shows that fully 90 per cent. of appeals in which the Crown is involved go against the State. It is notorious that the individual wins every time. There seems to be an idea that if there is any possibility of a decision for injury, it must be given against the Government whether just or otherwise.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is right.

The Minister for Mines: In ninety-nine instances out of a hundred the decision is against the Government.

Mr. Davy: Does the individual always win in appeals against the Taxation Department?

Mr. Lindsay: One individual has always won so far!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I should not advise that one individual to continue, because he may lose heavily in the end. It is always well to retire from the field—

Mr. Mann: With your laurels.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is so.

Mr. Davy: Unless you have a long purse, enabling you to go to the Privy Council.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Recently a matter came before me and I suggested referring the question to an industrial magistrate. I could not see any possible ground upon which the magistrate

could give a decision against the Government—but he did so! The decision was not based on a question of law, but apparently because he thought the Government would be lenient.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Who was the magistrate?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I will not mention his name. He is a very good officer. The Leader of the Opposition objected to the appearance of the words "economic value." I consulted the Parliamentary draftsman on that point, but it seems that they are the best possible in the circumstances. When that hon. member talked about the possibility of the board determining whether land could be put to greater economic value by the production of some other commodity, he suggested that it could only apply if that land would produce a greater quantity of, say, potatoes than of some other commodity, yet there might be no market. Would the board or the Government, who have to pay the piper in the end, suggest that land should be taken over for closer settlement purposes merely to grow more potatoes, for which there was no market available? I cannot conceive of any Government considering such a proposition, even if the board were to suggest it. The words "economic value" mean that the land must be used to its fullest possible value.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is very good. We will alter that, if that is what it means.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: You could not alter it.

Mr. Davy: Then "economic value" means "economic value"—nothing else!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It means utilising the land to the fullest possible extent. Take, for instance, the land in the Avon Valley. One Opposition member said that the land there was exhausted.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is, for growing wheat.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But it is not.

Mr. Latham: It has got a bit weedy this year.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is the whole point.

Mr. Griffiths: The land cannot grow the crops that it did 30 years ago.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Neither will they be able to grow crops 30 years hence in the wheat belt that they can grow

to-day, if weeds are allowed to occupy the country. Formerly heavy crops were grown where now weeds and grasses flourish, for it is found that the land can carry sheep which means an easier means of livelihood. Is it said that the lands in the Wimmera districts of Victoria are exhausted? They have been growing wheat there for over 80 years. The trouble is that in the Avon Valley the settlers have allowed the weeds to flourish.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The man who knows the most about it and criticises it most, has never seen the country there!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have seen it.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Yes, from a train.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I know as much about this subject as the hon. member. I do not say I know as much about the Avon Valley, but I know as much about the principles of cultivation.

Mr. Davy: Do you say that the Avon Valley should be used for growing cereals rather than for sheep?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If the Avon Valley will produce greater wealth by the growing of cereals, then I say, yes.

Mr. Davy: Do you say, in fact, that it will.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If the country in the Avon Valley will support two families by the growing of cereals where it supports one family now, then again I say, yes.

Mr. Davy: Then do you say we should be growing cereals in the Avon Valley?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is possible that we should; I am not called upon to determine that point. It is for the board to say. I am not to judge the land there; I am merely giving my own opinion. I know there are vast areas in the Midland country and in the Greenough and Irwin districts, that could be put to far greater use and could carry five families where one is supported now. I do not think we need be much concerned about the term "economic value." The board will determine that and behind the board, Parliament has the Government. The board may make recommendations, but if the Government do not desire to resume the land, they will not do so.

Mr. Davy: But the board cannot operate unless the Government desire.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The board will be the instrument of the Government in order to resume land.

The Minister for Mines: The Government need not buy even if the board recommend.

Mr. Davy: But the Government have to prompt the board before they will move.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Leader of the Opposition criticised the report by Surveyor Lefroy regarding the Avon Valley. He suggested that we had no business using that report in connection with the acquisition of land in the Avon Valley. The hon. member knew of the existence of that report years ago, but he has not taken the slightest step to discount the statements.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Why should I?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If the statements contained in the report are injurious—

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: To whom?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If the report reflected upon the ability and energy of settlers in the Avon Valley, why did not the hon. member take the fullest opportunity to refute Mr. Lefroy's statements years ago?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There was nothing to refute.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There is not the slightest indication in the files to show that the statements made by Mr. Lefroy were ever repudiated or that the hon. member took any steps whatever to refute them. I am not prepared to say that the statements are absolutely accurate, but so long as they remain uncontroverted, they must stand.

Mr. Mann: Does not that report cover land as far as Coolgardie?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: How far does it go?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not know.

Mr. Mann: I was given to understand that the report covers an area as far east as Coolgardie and north to Mullewa.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member is drawing on his imagination.

Mr. Mann: No, I am not.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Leader of the Opposition also made a statement regarding improvements done in the Pinjarra district.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I did not mention Pinjarra.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, you did! The hon. member told us how the land

had been improved by the use of clovers. In my opinion the land referred to has not been improved to the fullest extent possible and will not be so improved unless it is cut up into smaller areas. I hope the House will not attempt to make vital amendments to the Bill, for in that event the measure will be dropped. The Government have brought down practically the same Bill as we have had before, and the only objections that can be taken will be to phrases and terms. In the last resort the board has to resume; and the board cannot resume, except with the sanction of the Government. I think the experiences of the House prove that that is a satisfactory safeguard.

Mr. Thomson: I do not know that it is, having regard to some of our experiences.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Whenever the Government have resumed land, the resumption has been to the advantage of the property owner. The experience has been that the Government have paid more than the property was worth. That has applied even in the city.

Mr. Davy: I do not know that you can say that, for the case was decided by a judge of the Supreme Court.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In a recent instance, a compensation claim, the judge gave more than the amount claimed.

Mr. Davy: Well that was the justice of the thing.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It could not have been justice.

Mr. Davy: You are judging a judge of the Supreme Court.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If I, as appellant, make a claim and say, "This is what I have lost, and this is what I am entitled to," how can some other man say that I, who know my losses, am not accurate; that my statement should be discounted and that he is a better position to judge of it than am I?

Mr. Davy: But you are criticising a judge!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Why not?

Mr. Davy: Oh, surely not.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Why should a man not criticise a judge?

Mr. Davy: Well, usually we prefer to leave the judges uncriticised.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: As I say, in one case the judge gave more than was claimed by the appellants.

Mr. Davy: Would you mind mentioning that case; will you tell me afterwards?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, I will tell you of it afterwards, and you can have confirmation.

Mr. Davy: Thank you.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I hope the second reading will be carried, and that when in Committee members will not attempt to make vital alterations in the Bill. If they do, the Bill will be withdrawn from discussion.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT. AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 23rd August.

MR. DAVY (West Perth) [9.48]: I propose to be engaged for only about two minutes on this Bill. I have read it carefully and can see no ground for objection to its being carried to its second reading. I take it all of us in Western Australia are inclined to regard, if not with suspicion, at any rate with very great care any proposal for co-operation between us and the Commonwealth. We are always inclined to suspect in Commonwealth proposals for a combination of the two parties, that there might be, to use a colloquialism, some nigger in the woodpile that we do not perceive at first sight. I cannot find any nigger in the woodpile in this proposal. It seems to me to be an eminently sensible, businesslike proposition that cannot fail to lead to greater efficiency in the preparation of our electoral rolls. We have been told that by this we shall not effect any great economy. I cannot see how we can fail to effect some economy. But it is claimed that the result of this proposed amalgamation will be that we shall get more effective rolls. I think every member who has recently fought an election will have discovered that in the past the Federal roll has been a more accurate roll than the State roll. Therefore we cannot fail, I think, to get our rolls more up to date, more accurate, by this proposal. There are in the clauses a number of minor points

about which I propose to have something to say at the appropriate time, but which do not go to the basic principle of the Bill. For instance, I think that in endeavouring to bring into line the qualifications or disqualifications for voting as between the State and the Federal Act, the Minister for Justice is not quite correct. I do not quite like the idea, for instance, of allowing any person who has lived for six months in any part of Australia and only one month in Western Australia to vote. I would prefer to retain our present qualification, namely, that a man must have lived in this State for six months before being entitled to vote in a State election. Western Australia has interests so different and problems so diverse from those of other parts of Australia that we can ill afford to let what I might describe as Johnny-come-lightlies who have been in the State only one month to have a voice in the election of our Parliament. I would prefer to have that kept as it is.

The Minister for Justice: There would not be many who would have been here only one month before an election.

Mr. DAVY: But we might have a pastoralists' conference in Western Australia conveniently opening one month before an election; or we might even have an A.W.U. conference, which might bring large numbers of persons to Western Australia just early enough to be allowed to vote at the election. I would rather see the present qualification remain. However, that is a minor detail and does not go to the root of the Bill. Again, it is proposed to have an alteration made in the disqualification as, for instance, when a person is either undergoing sentence or subject to be sentenced. There, I think, the Minister is quite wrong. I do not think a man should be deprived of his right to vote because he has been sentenced but the sentence has been suspended during good behaviour. I suggest we might get over that difficulty by striking out the words "or subject to be sentenced" and insert something like "awaiting sentence." It is inconceivable that a man found guilty of burglary and remanded pending sentence should not be entitled to vote between the date of his conviction and the date of his actually being sentenced.

The Minister for Justice: He would hardly be out on bail.

Mr. DAVY: But there is nothing to say he should not vote, even if he is not out on

bail. The Act does not prevent a man from voting even if undergoing sentence, unless he is sentenced to at least one year's imprisonment. A person can be sentenced to six months' imprisonment and still be entitled to vote.

The Minister for Works: Then we shall have to see about sending canvassers to the gaols.

Mr. DAVY: It might be advisable. I would certainly advise the Minister to see that the gaols are properly canvassed on suitable occasions.

Mr. Sleeman: I have no objection to that.

Mr. DAVY: I am pretty confident I am right, so far as the law goes. It may be the Government administer the law in such a way that people in gaol for only a few weeks, if their period of incarceration synchronises with an election, are deprived of their votes. But the law does not say so.

The Minister for Justice: I think it does.

Mr. DAVY: No, I think not. However, we will not argue that across the floor of the House. I say the law permits of a prisoner voting, and I am confident the Minister will find it is so when he refreshes his memory. However, that is another minor matter that does not go to the root of the Bill.

The Minister for Works: Might not this provide a new form of roll-stuffing?

Mr. DAVY: I do not know quite how it would work out. I suppose the hon. member will arrange to have a number of his supporters get at least one year in gaol.

The Minister for Works: Then we have a number of prisoners down on the farm.

Mr. DAVY: Yes, some of his supporters will be sent to gaol, and some to the prison farm.

Mr. Sleeman: After that band, he should get a few.

Mr. DAVY: Yes, I think he should get most of the votes in Fremantle Gaol, probably the lot of them. However, these remarks are not intended as criticism of the principles of the Bill. I have pleasure in supporting the second reading.

Question put and bells rung.

Mr. SPEAKER: This Bill requires an absolute majority to pass the second reading. I have satisfied myself that there is an absolute majority present, and declare the question carried.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]

BILL—HOSPITALS.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 23rd August.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [10.2]: This is the third occasion on which a Bill has been brought forward to amend the Act relating to the government of hospitals. The Act on the statute-book is dated 1894, and it will readily be admitted that the time has arrived when that legislation should be brought up to date. In 1921 the then Colonial Secretary (Hon. F. T. Broun) introduced a Bill, one object of which was to amend this legislation. In 1922 I had the honour to introduce a Bill and amongst the things it sought was to bring hospitals legislation up to date. I must admit that the Bill introduced by Mr. Broun was not received with over much cordiality, nor was the one introduced by me. In the former instance the measure sought to place the responsibility for hospitals on the rate-payers. The Bill was read a second time, and was then referred to a select committee. It will be within the recollection of members that the select committee, having fully inquired into the matter, unanimously recommended that a tax of 1d. in the pound should be imposed on all income. It was acknowledged that the position of the hospital service would have been relieved if that Bill had become an Act. Provision was made for intermediate wards, and free service for all patients in receipt of not more than £4 per week was to be provided. As that was the unanimous recommendation of the select committee, it was reasonable to expect that a general improvement would have resulted to the hospital service had the measure been passed in that form. The Bill now before us aims at bringing hospitals legislation up to date, and to that extent I am prepared to support it, but there is another phase of the measure with which I cannot agree. The Minister for Health, when moving the second reading, referred to the Hospitals Bill of 1922 and said that if it had been intended that the hospitals should receive the benefit of the whole of the money from the penny in the pound tax, the measure would have been a good one. I agree with the Minister and suggest that he might amend this Bill on those lines, and so make provision for the imposition of such a tax. If that were done the position of the hospitals throughout the

State would be materially improved. The hospital service for many years past has been unsatisfactory. Special appeals are required to raise funds to enable the hospitals to carry on their work. Under one clause of the Bill, power is sought to solicit and receive donations and subscriptions and expend them on the welfare and comfort of the patients and staff and any other object of benefit to a hospital. We find that the same old method of collecting funds for hospitals, that of appealing to those who are sufficiently interested or generous, is to apply under the Bill now before us. If the measure becomes law the same spectacle will be witnessed in the future that has been seen in the past, namely, all manner of methods will be adopted for the raising of money, such as the sale of buttons and flowers, of raffle tickets and sweep tickets. The system will be continued in order that those who are sick may have an opportunity of being brought back to health. To Part IV, the greatest exception will be taken. Therein lies the nigger in the wood pile. It is the kernel of the Bill. No objection could be raised to the necessity for bringing our hospital legislation up to date. In Part IV., however, power is to be given to the local authorities to pay up to 10 per cent. of their revenue for hospital services, for the construction of buildings, and so on. Power is to be given to them to borrow money, and the Governor may declare the district to be served. The payment to be made by the local authorities is to be in proportion to the revenue received by them. If a proposal to establish a hospital in a particular centre is approved by the district concerned, the local authorities will be voluntarily committed to the undertaking; on the other hand, if two-thirds approve, the remaining third will be compelled, without recourse, to become parties to the arrangement. In this respect the Bill is arbitrary and compulsory. The road boards are facing a difficult position because of their responsibilities regarding road maintenance. Within the past few years the cost of road upkeep has been trebled. Motor transport is imposing such a heavy burden upon roads that the position of the local authorities has been seriously affected. In addition, I would remind the House that the subsidy provided by the Minister for Works has been reduced.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: If the hon. member is not feeling well, he may continue his speech sitting down.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Would it not be possible for the debate to be adjourned, and the hon. member to be allowed to continue his speech later?

Hon. G. Taylor: Move that the hon. member be heard at a later stage.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I understand that has been done before, and I see no objection to its being done again.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I move—

That the debate be adjourned, and that the hon. member be heard at a later stage.

Motion put and passed; the debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.13 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 31st August, 1927.

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

EXTRACTS.

Speaker's Remarks.

Mr. Thomson having given notice of a question which included a newspaper extract,

Mr. SPEAKER: I just want to remind hon. members that in communicating extracts to the House it is advisable to give a summary, and not a lengthy quotation such as that which has just been delivered. It is preferable to allude to a newspaper article in such a way that it can be referred to without the country being put to the ex-