

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 7th October, 1913.

	PAGE
Pétition: University Lands Bill	1552
Papers presented	1552
Questions: Phosphate deposits	1552
Pleuro-pneumonia at Robb's jetty	1552
Government Printing Office and private work	1552
Tramway extension, Mount's Bay road	1553
Mail steamers and passenger fares	1553
Bills: Local Option, 1A.	1553
Fremantle Improvement, 3A.	1553
District Fire Brigades Act Amendment, 2A., Com.	1562
Mines Regulation, Com.	1567
Land Valuation, 2A.	1568
Friendly Societies Act Amendment, 2A., Com.	1589
Fisheries Act Amendment, 2A.	1590
Criminal Code Amendment, Order postponed	1590
Assent to Bills	1597
Adjournment, special	1592

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

PETITION—UNIVERSITY LANDS BILL.

Mr. DWYER (Perth) presented a petition signed by the Warden of the Convocation of the University of Western Australia, praying the House to refuse its sanction to the transfer of the Endowment lands at West Subiaco to the Government in exchange for lands at Crawley.

Petition received, read, and ordered to lie on the Table of the House.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Premier: Balance sheet, report, and returns of the Government Savings Bank for the year ended 30th June, 1913.

By the Minister for Works: 1, By-laws of the roads boards of Perth, Warren, and Shark Bay. 2, Trespass and poundage fees of the Yalgoo roads board.

QUESTION—PHOSPHATE DEPOSITS.

Mr. GREEN (for Mr. E. B. Johnston) asked the Minister for Lands. 1, In view of the fact that this State imports practically all the phosphate required in connection with the production of super-phosphates and other artificial manures, will the Government obtain a reliable re-

port on the deposits of rock phosphates existing on the Recherche Archipelago and other islands near Esperance? 2, If the deposits are of suitable quality, will the Government consider the question of establishing works for the State manufacture of fertilisers, with a view to supplying same to our farmers on reasonable terms and at the lowest possible price. If not, why not?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Lands) replied: 1, Reports have been previously obtained on these and other deposits. 2, As a result of the investigations made the Government are of opinion that it would not be advisable for the State to embark on the large capital expenditure which would be necessary for the erection of the necessary plant for the manufacture of these deposits into commercial fertilisers.

QUESTION—PLEURO-PNEUMONIA AT ROBB'S JETTY.

Mr. LANDER asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Is he aware that pleuro-pneumonia is very bad amongst the cattle at Robb's Jetty? 2, Will he see that every precaution is taken to stay the spread of same by enforcing the quarantine regulations? 3, Will he see that a better inspection is made at ports of shipment, where affected animals are shipped?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Lands) replied: 1, During the month of September out of over 1,000 head of cattle passed through Fremantle from the North-West about 25 were found to be more or less affected with pleuro-pneumonia. These were destroyed, and the affected portions kept out of consumption. 2, Due precaution is being taken. 3, We have a qualified veterinary surgeon at the port of shipment, and, acting under the authority given by the Stock Act, this officer has already held up one shipment, and destroyed cattle found to be affected.

QUESTION—GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE AND PRIVATE WORK.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS asked the Premier: 1, Is he aware that a firm who had

a contract to execute an amount of printing for the Perth City Council, finding themselves in difficulties owing to the cheap rate at which they tendered for the work, had a large amount of the work carried out in the Government Printing Office at actual cost price? 2, Is it a common practice for printing firms when they find themselves in difficulties to make use of the Government Printing Office in this manner? 3, Is it the custom of the Government Printing Office to lend type and other accessories of printing, often amounting to hundreds of pounds value, to private firms, absolutely free of charge?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes, but this is not due to the cause stated. Ordinary trade rates will be charged. 2, No, only in exceptional cases. 3, No, a charge is made in each instance.

QUESTION—TRAMWAY EXTENSION, MOUNT'S BAY ROAD.

Mr. ALLEN asked the Minister for Railways: 1, What is the distance of tram extension necessary for the conveyance of the public to the baths proposed to be erected by the Perth City Council on the Swan River? 2, What is the estimated cost of such extension? 3, Have the Government the rails necessary to carry out this work? 4, Will the Government, upon the council immediately commencing the work of building the baths, undertake to simultaneously carry out the necessary extension of the tram?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, 70 chains. 2, £5,844. 3, No rails are at present in stock, but a quantity is on order for extensions. 4, It has been decided that this extension must stand over and be considered in conjunction with other equally necessary and urgent extensions.

QUESTION—MAIL STEAMERS AND PASSENGER FARES.

Mr. MONGER asked the Premier: 1, Is it not a fact that the fares charged by the P. & O. and Orient Companies from London to Fremantle and *vice versa* are

the same as the fares from London to Sydney and *vice versa*, whereas the voyage to Sydney takes 10 days longer? 2, If so, will the Government make representation to the two companies with a view to the fares being arranged on a fair and reasonable basis to this State?

The PREMIER replied: 1 and 2, I am not officially aware that the circumstances are as stated by the honourable member in his question. He, or any private member, however, equally with any other citizen of the State, can make direct representations on such matters to the private companies concerned, who regulate their own affairs. The matter is one which cannot be dealt with by the Government.

BILL—LOCAL OPTION.

Introduced by the Attorney General and read a first time.

BILL—FREMANTLE IMPROVEMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

BILL—DISTRICT FIRE BRIGADES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan) in moving the second reading, said: This Bill is one to empower the Fire Brigades Board to borrow money. It was intended at the outset that we should provide the maximum that may be borrowed under this Bill, but after consideration I thought with the provision that the Governor in Council should approve of any borrowing we would sufficiently safeguard our interests without stipulating any maximum, and we would not be compelled so frequently to bring down Bills of such a nature. In fact, we are frequently compelled to bring down a Bill giving power to borrow because we are always nervous of trusting those who are appointed or elected by the various institutions to do

that which we consider in the best interests of those concerned. On this occasion the Bill is necessary because the board had made complete arrangements for raising a sum of £50,000, and after they had made those arrangements they found their security was not satisfactory for two reasons. The first reason was that existing debenture holders had the right to all existing and future assets of the board, and that precluded anybody else from obtaining any security other than by way of a second mortgage. This proposed loan was being raised through a bank and the bank wanted an opportunity of being able to foreclose if necessary, an occurrence which is not likely to take place, but for the purpose of safeguarding its interests the bank did require some security. I do not propose when introducing this Bill to go into details in connection with the work of the board since their appointment, more than to say that they have been called upon to do a great deal of developmental work due to the fact that buildings are being erected in all parts of the State, towns in the country districts are extending, we are extending the water supplies, and the board are called upon to make provision for protection against fire, and it is impossible to ask them to make all this provision from ordinary revenue. The demand would be too great to be borne by the municipalities, the insurance companies, and the Government, and as this expenditure is, in many instances, practically for all time, the board considered, and I concurred, that it would be better to borrow money, if they could get it at a reasonable rate, to make this provision rather than to go without the proper protection which, under the Act they are administering, they are supposed to provide.

Mr. Underwood interjected.

The PREMIER: I have heard that said before on many occasions, but those who have spoken about doing work without borrowing have been generally those who complained most when Governments have tried to carry on without it, and we find in Australia that so many of our resources

demand the expenditure of huge capital for their development that we are not able to make much development without recourse to borrowing. That experience is shared by many private people who find that it is necessary to borrow money to make money.

Mr. Underwood interjected.

The PREMIER: The hon. member will appreciate the fact that everybody cannot lend. Only those who have can lend and very frequently they borrow first and then are able to lend afterwards. I went into this question very thoroughly before deciding to submit this measure to Parliament, and I am satisfied that the board have made a wonderfully good bargain; in fact I would like to know how they did it in order that I might go and do likewise. The deal is very satisfactory, and that being the case, I think we ought to give the necessary power to the board and also the protection to the bank which is finding the money. Then in Subclause 4 of Clause 3 it is provided that in the event of default being made in payment of any of the debentures, the debenture holders shall have the right to apply to the Supreme Court to appoint a receiver of the property and of the revenue and income of the board, but as the Fire Brigades Board are to some extent a Government body and the debenture holders are well protected by the backing which the Government give the board from time to time, the board are not likely to be allowed to get into such a position as will compel the debenture holders to apply to the Supreme Court for the appointment of a receiver.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Where do they get their revenue?

The PREMIER: From the fire insurance companies, the municipalities, and the Government.

Hon. J. Mitchell: One thirteenth.

Hon. Frank Wilson: No, two-eighths the Government pay.

The PREMIER: The Government and the municipalities bear most of the burden. A small amount of this money, £23,700 will be utilised for the redemption of existing loans from the Savings

Bank and this will be money made available to the Government. The board will then start with one loan and one loan charge only. I therefore have pleasure in submitting this Bill to the favourable consideration of the House. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. FRANK WILSON (Sussex) : I do not know that the House is very much wiser from the Premier's explanation of this measure. We know it is going to give certain unlimited powers to the board to borrow money at a rate of interest up to six per cent. The Premier has not, however, told us what this £23,700 liability has been incurred in or to whom it is due, nor has he told us how the board propose to spend the additional £26,300 that it is proposed to borrow, making the £50,000 for which purpose the Bill is introduced. Perhaps the Premier will do that before the Bill passes the second reading.

The Premier : Do what ?

Hon. FRANK WILSON : I want to know if the Premier will be good enough to tell us what the £23,700 which the Fire Brigades Board at present owe to the Government and other institutions has been expended on and also on what the board propose to expend the £26,300 being the balance of the £50,000 which it is suggested they should raise, if they get the authority contained in this measure, in order that we may have some idea as to whether it is wise to confer this further power, notwithstanding that we have the safeguard of the approval of the Governor-in-Council to any suggested further borrowing. The present limit, according to the Act of 1909, is £5,000 and I understand that the board are indebted to the Treasurer to the tune of £16,000 or £17,000, that there is an overdraft or loan liability in connection with outside financial institutions, and that it is in the first instance in order to pay off that liability to the financial institutions that these extra powers are being sought. But there is also a very great inducement to the Government to introduce the measure inasmuch as the Treasurer is to be recouped to the

extent of £16,000 or £17,000 which he has advanced and which he is only too anxious to have repaid in the present stringent state of the finances. It was refreshing to hear from the Premier the pronouncement this afternoon that the country cannot make much headway without borrowing, and I am quite in accord with him in that expression of opinion; but we must borrow in a judicious manner and with all due safeguards, and we must not allow even the Fire Brigades Board to run amok so far as borrowing is concerned, and thus increase the burden on the municipalities and the insurance companies, to say nothing of the two eighths contribution by the Treasurer. The Government pay two-eighths of the annual expenditure, the municipalities have to pay three-eighths and the insurance companies the other three-eighths, so that we have the Government paying one-quarter, and the municipalities and insurance companies paying the remaining three-quarters of the annual expenditure. That will of course be a safeguard which all reasonable men might put some faith in, because the insurance companies represented on the board and the municipalities also represented on the board are not likely to sanction a large borrowing policy for which they will be liable to the tune of three-quarters. There is not the same degree of check, if I may use the term, on the Government, who have only to pay one-quarter of the annual expenditure of the board, and therefore are not interested to the same extent as the other contributing parties, but I think we may safeguard the further borrowing powers of the Fire Brigades Board? It is an undoubted fact they have had to acquire a considerable amount of property, not only in the municipalities but in Fremantle and in other important centres in Western Australia. They of course, have made on them every year demands to establish branch stations. Whether they deal fairly with the outlying portions of the State or not I am not prepared to say. The due report will be produced year by year to show what works have been undertaken by the

board, and whether the outlying portions of the country have been properly safeguarded in the administration. I have no doubt there is a tendency to concentrate—possibly too much of a tendency to concentrate—in the more populous centres. Indeed, I have had complaints once or twice from the country districts in this direction.

Mr. Holman: What districts?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: At the same time one has to readily recognise that the contributions of the country districts are not very heavy.

Mr. Lander: Some of them will not pay their share.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I know that some of them are not paying up the demands made on them from time to time. I had a complaint in regard to the Collie municipality. A large sum of money was demanded from them for their annual contribution, and they reckoned it was excessive. I have had several other complaints, I cannot remember where they were from. These municipalities naturally think that the board was the proper place in which representations should be made, and failing the board, the Government. Therefore, one does not take a deep interest in the complaints made, which otherwise it would be the duty of any member to take. I think the Premier has made a mistake, if he will excuse me for saying so, in not putting some limit in the Bill. He was good enough to show me a draft of the proposed Bill as submitted by the board a week or two since. It was suggested in the first instance that we should give them £50,000. I think it would be wise for Parliament to retain the control of the total amount of the borrowings of the board. It is all very well to say you have the safeguard in the Governor-in-Executive-Council, but one knows the Treasurer has financed the institution by advancing a large sum of money over and above what they were legally entitled to borrow by the present legislation, and he is anxious to recoup himself. Therefore it goes without saying that the Government of the day who are likely to participate would agree rather than refuse the neces-

sary sanction which perhaps would be their attitude under other circumstances. Therefore I think the Premier should first of all give us, if he can give it to us, some information as to what this £23,700 has been expended on by the board, and secondly, to give us a rough outline of what it is proposed to do with the balance of the money which it is proposed to raise immediately, because it seems they want to raise £50,000. And then he should, if he will, kindly give us more explicit reasons why Parliament should not have a limit placed in the Bill of the £50,000 as originally intended, so that there may be some satisfactory check on the borrowings of this board, inasmuch as they have had to come to Parliament from time to time to get increased authority. I do not think it would be detrimental to have to appeal to Parliament in cases of this sort. This board is doing excellent work; perhaps some of the members of the House who are members of the board may want to have a free hand, but other members cannot expect to take such a lively interest in the board as the members having a seat on the board take. Therefore it may be found that as time slips away, the Governor-in-Council has sanctioned an excessive borrowing, and the board are up to their eyes in debt, and the demands from the municipalities not being met they were in danger of having a receiver put in to take possession of the assets of the board, and levy a rate contribution as provided under the Act. The clause, as the Premier explained, gives full power in default of payment to put in a receiver in charge of the whole undertaking, and to levy an amount to be contributed by the various boards and by the Government. I do not think it is desirable that the Government should be placed in a position that a receiver should be appointed. In order that they may carry on their work, which I have already said is a good work, in the State, I am prepared to allow the Bill to go through the second reading.

Mr. HOLMAN (Murchison): I desire to support the second reading of this Bill, and as a member of the Fire Bri-

gades Board, in all probability I will be able to give the leader of the Opposition some of the information asked for. So far as I am personally concerned, were it possible to carry on the important work the Fire Brigades Board has to carry on out of revenue, I would be only too pleased to do so, but in a new State like Western Australia, where there are so many important centres opening up, and where the whole of the metropolitan area is making such rapid progress, it is utterly impossible, nor would it be fair to the contributing bodies, to call on them to the extent of the many thousands of pounds a year to pay for all that is required out of revenue. New buildings are being erected which will last for many years, but especially where new fire stations are being erected and the purchase of land is being made, it would not be fair for the contributing bodies to be called upon to pay the whole of that expenditure. In Western Australia at the present time—a new country—it is absolutely necessary to provide fire protection in every place according as its importance warrants. The leader of the Opposition asks how the £23,000, which has already been loaned to the Fire Brigades Board has been expended. I may inform him that a great deal has been spent in the purchase of land and the erection of buildings in Perth. Then we have the Fremantle fire station, and the land purchased there. Also at Boulder and Kalgoorlie and other places. Then there is the provision of street fire alarms, which alone—Mr. Lapsley, the chief officer of the Fire Brigade Board, says—have cost £10,000. This £10,000 in street fire alarms has provided an up-to-date provision for the prevention of fire. Out of the £23,000 it would not be hard to realise where the balance has gone, when we look at the fire stations at Perth, at Fremantle, at Boulder, and other places. The leader of the Opposition asks what is to be done with the balance of the £50,000.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Fire alarms in the streets become obsolete in a few years.

Mr. HOLMAN: They last for many years. In fact, the fire alarms which have been provided in Perth and Fremantle and

in the larger towns of the goldfields will last for many years. At the present time the board are paying high rentals for buildings which are occupied, and some of the money to be authorised by the Bill will be spent in Perth in bringing the station up to date. For this something like £7,000 will be required. In Maylands, an important suburb covering a large area, where there are a great many fire risks, the board require about £1,200 for a proper and suitable station. In Claremont, another place which is improving rapidly, some £2,000 is to be expended. In Kellerberrin, a rising country district, covering a large area, it is proposed to spend £1,000 in the erection of a fire station. In Northam, another important place, £2,000 is to be expended. The member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) will realise that the accommodation in that town is not suitable. At Midland Junction it is proposed to spend a certain amount of money, also at other places. Owing to the fact that the fire appliances are obsolete, and that more up-to-date appliances are being acquired throughout the Commonwealth and the whole civilised world, such as motor fire engines, it is absolutely necessary to obtain these appliances, and it is proposed to expend £7,000 in acquiring this year up-to-date appliances, and in the following years another £3,000 in motor engines. These are necessary to keep pace with the provision of up-to-date appliances in case of fires occurring, and I think the board will require more borrowing powers than the £50,000 mentioned by the leader of the Opposition. For instance, we have Geraldton, Bunbury, and other important places, where it is absolutely necessary to have proper accommodation in connection with fire stations. York and a number of other places as well should be mentioned. When we compare fire brigades in Western Australia with those in the other States, so far as borrowing is concerned, I think we are in a fair position.

Hon. Frank Wilson: What are you going to do with the obsolete stuff?

Mr. HOLMAN: A good deal of what might be called obsolete stuff is drafted on to the outer stations. but at the same

time we are making provisions to prevent the gathering of any more obsolete stuff than is absolutely necessary. On every occasion efforts are made to keep the appliances up to date, and the portions that become more obsolete are sent to the stations where the most modern equipment is not required. Hon. members will realise that warehouses in Perth are carrying increasingly large stocks, and the fire risks are increasing every year, so that it is necessary to have more fire appliances to-day than it was a few years ago. We have to consider the point of view as to whether it would be fair to ask the contributing bodies to spend the whole of the money from revenue. Such a thing would be an impossibility. I have always been in favour of the volunteer system of fire brigades, and I am in favour of that system at the present time, but even for volunteer brigades it is necessary to have the proper station and appliances if they are to do any good. The board keep expenditure down to the lowest possible limit, and the expenditure this year in comparison with other years, can be regarded, I think, as very reasonable. When we note that a great deal of our money is spent in paying rents, we recognise that we must have provision to get buildings of our own. The terms under which this amount is spoken of as being secured at the present time are perhaps more satisfactory than any member of the board considered we would be able to get it. The interest we have to pay on money borrowed at the present time amounts only to $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and I think hon. members will realise that these are very fair terms indeed. It is also the intention of the board to make provision for a sinking fund so that the loans can be redeemed. It is the intention of the board to give all the attention that is possible to the erection of stations and the provision of appliances, and at the same time to keep the expenditure down to the lowest possible limit. I do not think any members will object to the passing of this Bill. I would not favour the giving of unlimited power to the board to borrow money without consent and splash that money, because they might

possibly go too far. Having on every occasion opposed the borrowing of money where it could be prevented, I have no hesitation in asking the House to pass this measure because I have a working knowledge of the board, and I know it is absolutely necessary for this proposal to be carried, as we must provide proper accommodation for fire brigades in this State and we cannot do it without money.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Is there a sinking fund provided for in the Bill?

Mr. HOLMAN: No, the board have to provide for this themselves. The debentures it is proposed to issue will be redeemed as soon as possible, although I do not know how long it will be, as I have not gone into details in that direction. I feel sure the work that will be done will be satisfactory, and that is absolutely required in the interests of fire protection in this State. If we curtailed the amount to £50,000 other important centres could not be provided for and I do not think it is necessary that on every occasion when a small loan is necessary, the whole business of the country should be stopped until a Bill is brought before Parliament to authorise the borrowing of the money. I do not think there is any reason for hon. members to feel dubious in any way in connection with this Bill, as the whole matter has been gone carefully into, and, speaking as one who does not believe in using borrowed money if it can possibly be helped, I am satisfied in this case the work cannot be pushed on without it.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You have abandoned all those principles concerning the borrowing of money now?

Mr. HOLMAN: On this occasion it is for the protection of property, and I feel sure that that aspect will appeal to the Leader of the Opposition, when he knows the whole of this money is going to be spent for the protection of property, and for the same reason it should receive the support of other hon. members opposite. As buildings become larger in Perth and accommodate a greater number of employees, it is rendered even more necessary that the fullest possible fire protection should be given, and it is im-

possible to give that necessary protection unless we have proper housing and station accommodation as well as appliances to cope with any big conflagration that may take place.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam): In speaking on this measure, I would like to say that there is probably no place that more justifies proper fire brigade equipment than does Northam. Our equipment is not up to date at the present time, and it ought to be up to date. I am surprised to hear the arguments of hon. members opposite. One of the principle planks in their platform is that they are opposed to the borrowing of money except for reproductive work, but wherever it suits them the pledges they gave to the country are deserted. I suggest that in order to preserve these planks of their platform they should powellise them.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is out of order.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The country returns hon. members opposite pledged to a certain line of action—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! This Bill is dealing with a certain institution.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It is a Government measure and relates to an institution supported by the Government funds and we are asked to allow the country's credit to be pledged to meet this expenditure. This expenditure would not bring in one particle of revenue, and while I realise that fire stations could not be put up without money borrowed in this way, I also realise that there is no provision in the Bill for an adequate sinking fund. It states that the Government may provide a sinking fund, but it does not say they must, or what the amount is to be. I think some limit should be set against this borrowing. When the Premier wants to borrow money even for a small railway he has to bring down a Bill, and there is no reason why from time to time a Bill should not be brought down to authorise the borrowing of money in connection with fire brigade expenditure. I think we have a right to object to a Bill of this sort providing no limitation to the borrowing at all. There should be a sink-

ing fund and it should cover the cost of the work.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Will you move in that direction?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The hon. member is doing nothing at the present time and can draft an amendment which will be more likely to be carried than if I submitted it. The Premier said that in a young country like this, where so much is needed, work cannot be carried on except by the use of borrowed money. It is refreshing, indeed, to hear that. Everyone knows that money must be borrowed, if this country is to be developed, but I think it is a pity that so many authorities should be given power to borrow. I think the Premier could have got this money from the Savings Bank without giving the board power to raise money.

The Premier: Will you try to be serious sometimes? The most irresponsible utterances I have heard from a public man come from you.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am entering a protest against the want of limitation in this Bill and the rate of interest that may be paid by this authority. Of course, I should be absolutely irresponsible if I asked the Premier to lend the money, because I know he has not got it, but I know he could borrow it just as he could for any other local authority or for his own works.

Mr. Holman: Unless the Fire Brigades Board have the security where are they going to borrow the money?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: What I am pointing out is that there is no limitation set up in the Bill. In a previous measure there was a limitation and there should be a limitation. I merely rose to enter my protest against this method of dealing with an important matter of this kind, the borrowing of money, and to ask the Premier to see that a satisfactory sinking fund is provided.

Mr. Holman: There is a sinking fund at the present time.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The hon. member who last spoke pleased me very much by his frank admission that his previous principles are being deserted, and he is perfectly willing to authorise the borrow-

ing of money for work that is not reproductive in the slightest extent.

Mr. Holman: It is all reproductive.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: We cannot always limit our borrowing, as the hon. member professed to do, for work that will provide interest and sinking fund during the life of the work. However, I have entered my protest against this method of doing business, and I hope I shall have some influence upon the Premier, for I know he is anxious to do what is right, although in this instance he is doing what is wrong in asking us to pass the Bill, and simply making the excuse that he does not want to come more often than is necessary to Parliament for authorisation, when he knows that authorisation must be had from time to time before he can spend money on any work whatever.

The PREMIER (in reply): There is really very little to answer in the criticisms of hon. members. Indeed they have been already answered by the member for Murchison (Mr. Holman) who is also a member of the Fire Brigades Board. When introducing the measure I explained to the House that when first submitted the Bill made provision to limit the amount of the borrowing powers of the Fire Brigades Board to £50,000, the amount they had already negotiated for and had made all final arrangements for raising, and that if they wanted to raise a pound or more above that amount we would require to again submit a similar Bill to Parliament, and that I thought we should have confidence in the Governor-in-Council to deal with matters of this kind. I explained that no borrowing could be done by the board without the approval of the Governor-in-Council, and so long as we had that necessary protection all that was necessary had been provided. Hon. members know that quite a number of powers are delegated to boards and local authorities, frequently with less restriction than this, and so where this provision is made there cannot be very much objection. The Governor-in-Council is not likely to permit the board to borrow money at such a pace as to land the board in difficulties, because it is a

semi-Government institution and the Government would have to take over the responsibility.

Hon. Frank Wilson: It is not a semi-Government institution.

The PREMIER: Yes.

Hon. Frank Wilson: The Government are not responsible for the contributions.

The PREMIER: The Government are not responsible for the yearly contributions, but as a Government we are responsible for the property of the board under the last analysis. I am unable to see what would happen in the event of the board refusing to carry on, or if the board got into difficulties, other than that the Government should step in and take over the board's responsibility for the mortgage. We require that for the proper protection of the debenture holders. But I am still of opinion that the Government or Parliament would not be likely to permit a board to step out and a receiver be appointed, because the fire brigade's work must be carried on for the protection, not alone of property, but also of life. There is more reason why the Government should step in and continue the operations of the board, —perhaps not on exactly the same lines, but still to continue the protection of life and property if the board should fail in their obligations—than there would be for the Government to step in where boards are appointed for other purposes, such as a water supplies and drainage. In quite a number of instances during the last few years the Government have had to step in and take over the work which some such board had previously performed. The same thing applies in respect to the Fire Brigades Board. Certainly the Fire Brigades Board is a semi-Government institution, and that being the case, the Governor-in-Council would insist upon being satisfied that any money which the board desired to borrow should not be in excess of requirements or of the board's capacity to meet their obligations. If we have that protection we have all that is necessary. We are continually introducing Bills and taking up the time of Parliament for the purpose really of continuing the operations of boards and

other institutions ; not extending their powers, but merely giving them the right to continue to do what Parliament has already given them the power to do. So long as we have the protection of the Governor-in-Council it is sufficient. Parliament can move the Governor-in-Council, and so Parliament has its own protection. If the Governor-in-Council is not acting in accordance with the wishes of Parliament, Parliament has its remedy in making an amendment of the Act itself or by amending the constitution of the Executive Council. So far as the method by which it is proposed to expend this money is concerned, I pointed out on the second reading that I did not intend to go into that question. We have appointed a board for the purpose. I am satisfied that they require this money to do work which is essential to the protection of life and property, and that if they cannot get the money by these means it is impossible to obtain it by any other.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Do you not think that Parliament also should be satisfied.

The PREMIER: Parliament should be satisfied. I pointed out that it was for the purpose of the redemption of an existing loan, only giving power for the expenditure of an additional £27,000, and that Parliament was fully aware that our towns are growing at a tremendous pace in different parts of the State. In the metropolitan area new buildings of the value of £650,000 have been added. That involves additional protection from fire, and, as the member for Murchison pointed out, the protection of the lives of those engaged in those buildings. We must have proper fire protection, not for the purpose of protecting the buildings so much as for the purpose of protecting the lives of those employed in those buildings, and it cannot be obtained out of ordinary revenue, and so we must give permission to the board to borrow money. I think I have answered all that has been said, except one point which the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) tried to make, namely, that as a party we have continually opposed the borrowing of money for other than reproductive works. He tries to make it appear that as a

Government we are responsible for the expenditure of this money by the board. To some extent, perhaps, we are, by asking Parliament to give authority to borrow money. But in this case I am again prepared to carry the responsibility and to say that where the expenditure is essential for the protection of life the question of whether or not the money is borrowed for a reproductive work will not weigh with me to any great extent. I would rather protect life than adhere to the strict letter of the provision mentioned by the member for Northam, and if the board are satisfied that they can do better by the borrowing of this money—and I am satisfied that they can—then I hold that it cannot be urged against us that we have done anything which is a breach of the pledge we gave to our constituents.

Mr. O'Loughlen: What about a provision for a sinking fund?

The PREMIER: That is a matter for the board to arrange. The member for Murchison has pointed out that the board proposed to do that.

Mr. Holman: They are doing it now.

The PREMIER: I have never heard a single complaint against the board at present in existence, but I have frequently had conversations with members of the board, and I am satisfied from those conversations and from their reports to Parliament that they are doing excellent work; and until such time as I am dissatisfied with the operations of the board I am not going to unduly interfere with their internal administration. If Parliament gives powers to a board let that board conduct its own business.

Mr. O'Loughlen: It is wise to intimate that they should have a sinking fund.

The PREMIER: There is no need to intimate to a board something which the board has intimated it proposes to do. That being the case, I see no reason why we should do anything other than give the board power to raise the money, and satisfy ourselves that any future borrowings shall be for the purpose of extending the operations of the board under due protection. That protection we are securing by providing that the Governor-in-

Council shall approve of such moneys as they shall raise from time to time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Holman in the Chair, the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Repeal of Section 53:

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The section to be repealed provided for a sinking fund to pay off the debentures. With the section repealed, the Fire Brigades Board would not be required to make any provision whatever for a sinking fund. Indeed, the board might go further and say it was obviously the intention of Parliament that such sinking fund should not be provided, seeing that Parliament had repealed the provision prescribing the setting up of a sinking fund. Notwithstanding the Premier's declaration that he was prepared to trust the Fire Brigades Board to do as they liked and borrow what money they liked—

The Premier: Do not put words into my mouth which I have not used. I said nothing of the sort.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: What the Premier said had conveyed that impression across the Chamber, and to his own followers as well. The arguments that we could make due safeguards for ourselves, and that the House could dictate to Executive Council, would not hold water. The House could do nothing of the sort. It was our duty to legislate in such a way as to provide for reasonable safeguards in the legislation. It was natural to suppose that the contributing parties who composed the board would make the burden as light as they could. When they found their contributions were excessive—and the member for Murchison had stated that many complaints were made by outlying districts as to the weight of the burdens they had to carry—such arguments might be brought to bear as would prevent the due establishment of a sinking fund. That was not desirable. There should be an amendment to make it imperative that a sinking fund, not an ex-

cessive one, should be provided for each loan as it was raised. The outside life of the alarms would be about 10 years, due, not so much to wear as that they became obsolete. A sinking fund was necessary to cover expense of that description. A building would stand for perhaps 50 years, but all the appliances, such as engines, alarms and a hundred and one details of equipment, which not only deteriorated but became obsolete, should be met by a sinking fund. The amount of the sinking fund need not be made hard and fast, but the board should have due regard for the lifetime of the equipment for which the sinking fund was provided.

The PREMIER: Matters of this kind could well be left to the board. The board had already made provision for a sinking fund. One of the conditions under which the money was borrowed was that the debenture holders insisted on a sinking fund of 2 per cent. per annum. Why should we unnecessarily interfere with the operations of the board which was doing satisfactory work? The loan being raised was £50,000.

Hon. Frank Wilson: We know nothing of that. You are repealing a section and they will not be compelled to have a sinking fund.

The PREMIER: One of the conditions insisted upon by the debenture holders was that a two per cent. sinking fund should be provided and the board had agreed to it, and there was no reason for making provision to cover something which had been already done. He had no objection to the provision of a sinking fund.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Well, why not say so?

The PREMIER: The board had made provision and there was no reason why it should be embodied in the measure. The loan was to be redeemed in 27 years. That was good financing, and the board should be complimented rather than interfered with by inserting in the Bill something which the hon. member thought was wise, but which the board also had considered wise and had agreed to.

Mr. WISDOM: If this Bill applied to the £50,000 mentioned by the Premier his

explanation might be accepted, but the Bill gave unlimited power. If the Premier considered that a sinking fund was desirable, there could be no harm in inserting a provision to that effect. It would not interfere with the present arrangement but would ensure that a sinking fund would be provided for future loans. Every local authority had to provide a sinking fund, and if the Premier did not insist on the provision in this case, local authorities should be relieved from that requirement also.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—Power to borrow money:

Hon. FRANK WILSON: In view of the fact that we were practically giving unlimited power to borrow, subject to endorsement by the Governor-in-Council, which meant the Government of the day, he would ask the Committee to limit the amount. It was hardly consistent to be indignant because we would not trust absolutely a board of this description when other bodies were limited. No doubt the Premier was satisfied and had in his possession the full information which had not been given to hon. members, but this legislation would stand until it was amended by Parliament, and we should take care not to allow things to go by the board simply because the Premier was satisfied. The Premier might not be in office very long and someone else would then have to be satisfied, and that someone else might be inclined to give more freedom than the Premier. It was wise to take every precaution. The negotiations which the board had entered into might never be completed and the board might have to start *de novo*. He moved an amendment—

That in line 3 the words "such amount" be struck out and the words "fifty thousand pounds" inserted in lieu.

If a larger sum was needed he would agree to it, as he desired to encourage the work of the board.

The PREMIER: The hon. member was hardly consistent in his amendment. The board had made provision for the raising of £50,000, which amount had

been earmarked. Every penny of it would be required to carry out the programme which the board had set themselves. If the amount was limited and the board desired to make other improvements, it would be necessary to get fresh approval from Parliament. It would be satisfactory if the Governor-in-Council was able to say whether they could borrow an additional amount or not. The hon. member's proposal to increase the amount showed what methods he would employ. Evidently he was not fully acquainted with the requirements of the board and was willing to give them whatever they required. That was not the proper attitude to adopt. Parliament could never satisfy itself sufficiently to state in a measure of this description what the requirements of the board would be, and if a sum was mentioned it should be the amount the board at present required. The board proposed to borrow £50,000, but not the whole of it immediately. In his opinion no further protection was required. The Executive Council would always satisfy itself by getting all the details necessary before approving of the board borrowing an additional amount. But Parliament never could. Even now hon. members could not know how this £50,000 would be expended. The measure had been introduced at the request of the board. The Governor-in-Council would have to be satisfied that the amount the board desired to borrow was in the best interests of the board and that they would not be landed in difficulties. The Government were satisfied that the £50,000 was required. All the protection needed was in the Bill; if the board over-stepped the mark Parliament could deal with them. There was no reason for the amendment.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: While he did not know whether it was absolutely necessary that the amendment should be carried, he urged on the Premier to give a direction to the board that there should be provision made for a sinking fund. The credit of Western Australia at the present time stood so much better than that of any of the Eastern States because we

had made this provision. One of the most retrograde acts which had ever been carried out was that of the late Government in reducing the sinking fund from one per cent. to half per cent.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Why not raise it again?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member was getting away from the amendment. The question of a sinking fund could not be dealt with on the amendment which was before the Committee.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: What he was endeavouring to do was to point out an alternative and he was suggesting that the Premier should see that a check was placed on the board in some other directions if he would not agree to a limitation. He was prepared to trust the board and he was convinced that the £50,000 already negotiated for would be spent in the right direction. After all, it was a matter for the Executive Council to deal with, but we did not know what Executive Council might be in power, and if we did not make the provision in this measure which was contained in other measures of a similar nature, we would be establishing a dangerous precedent. The Premier might give an assurance that in the event of the amendment not being accepted, and seeing that the Bill stipulated no amount, there should be protection in the way of provision for a sinking fund. This would not be overloading the Bill. The Premier had assured the Committee that, so far as the £50,000 was concerned, the provision which was in every Loan Act was being made here, but in regard to future loans or future applications to the Executive Council, his desire was to see a definite provision made regarding a sinking fund. This would not mean any interference with the functions of the board. It would not be a dictation of policy if we made provision that in future loans such a step should be taken.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: If the Premier desired to get Bills through he should give more consideration to members sitting in Opposition. The amendment had been submitted with the object of safeguarding the transactions of this

board and the Premier ought not to try to put a wrong construction on it. The Premier forgot that the amendment provided for £50,000 as a borrowing limit, and if there were further expenditure projected he (Hon. Frank Wilson) would be quite prepared to agree to a reasonable addition to the sum up to £60,000 or even £75,000. The Premier, however, immediately retorted that the board could borrow this amount, whereas they only wanted £50,000 and that he (Hon. Frank Wilson) desired to give the board this latitude, forgetting that even if we gave them the power to borrow, they would still have to go to the Executive Council to obtain the necessary sanction. He had told the Premier on more than one occasion that his duty was to give the Committee exact information and not to try to hoodwink members or put a wrong construction on what was said. The Premier adopted an aggressive manner and twisted and wriggled and put a wrong meaning into what was said. His (Hon. Frank Wilson's) proposal was that the board should have the power, with the sanction of the Governor-in-Council, to borrow up to £50,000.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): There is no limit at present.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Yes, £5,000.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): No; that was struck out in 1912.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: That might be, but in the measure before the Committee we were repealing Section 53 of the old Act and there was a limit in that.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): Oh yes, you are right.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: This was the first occasion in two years on which he had known a member of the Government acknowledge that he was in the right, and he hoped that *Hansard* and the Press would make a due note of the acknowledgment. His proposal was to limit the borrowing in the aggregate to £50,000, which was all that was asked for, and if he was assured that some latitude was desirable in addition to that £50,000 he would not mind giving it.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Since the tea adjournment the Premier had intimated that he was prepared to accept an amendment making it compulsory to have a sinking fund for any money borrowed by the Fire Brigades Board, the sinking fund to be prescribed by regulation as provided in the original Act of 1909. If that was the case, then in all probability we would be properly safeguarded. The Premier had explained that in the contract proposed to be entered into for borrowing £50,000 provision had been made for a sinking fund, and that he did not object to having it put into the Bill itself. When the Act was amended last year the purpose was to enable the Government to finance the Fire Brigades Board, who could not borrow money necessary to their carrying on, owing to their being unable to give reasonable security. The Government had financed the board to a considerable extent, and naturally the Premier wanted to get the money back again. Under these circumstances, and understanding that the Premier would subsequently move the proposed amendment, he (Hon. Frank Wilson) would withdraw his amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Mr. S. STUBBS: Six per cent. per annum on a gilt-edged security appeared to be pretty high. In his opinion the lenders of the money were as secure as the Bank of England. Consideration should be given to the interests of those who would have to pay the piper. On the second reading, and again in answer to queries by the leader of the Opposition, the Premier had stated that the money was required to build stations and to bring up to date the fire appliances in the City and in other important places. This, of course, should be done, but at the same time full consideration should be given to those who would have to foot the bill. Under the provisions of the measure those people would have no say whatever in regard to the 6 per cent. per annum.

Mr. Thomas: That is the maximum.

[Mr. McDowall took the Chair.]

[58]

Mr. S. STUBBS: Still, if some future board found that they could not, at the moment, borrow money at a reasonable rate, they might avail themselves of the maximum, in which case the property owners would have to pay the piper. As a maximum 5 per cent. would be ample—for it was to be remembered that a sinking fund would have to be provided in addition to the interest. It was likely to fall very heavy upon the smaller municipalities, who would very keenly feel the effects of this high rate of interest. In his opinion the provision giving the board power to borrow money was a good one, but he hoped the members of the board would see that the country districts were not called upon to carry an unduly heavy burden, and that whoever was responsible would see to it that the moneys raised were borrowed at the cheapest possible rate.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (Honorary Minister): Twelve months ago, when the Act was amended to give increased borrowing powers to the board, it had been pointed out by the board that, given these increased powers, they would be able to reduce the annual payments of the various contributing bodies. In the past a very large amount of capital expenditure had been necessarily met out of the annual contributions. As the result of some flaw the board had been prohibited from increasing the money borrowed. The Bill would overcome the difficulty. All the securities of the Fire Brigades Board had been given under a previous measure, and for further borrowings the board could only give second securities. The Bill would enable them to get over that difficulty. Members appeared to lose sight of the fact that in connection with fire brigades Parliament had the right of scrutiny, because every year the subsidy came up for consideration in the Estimates, and in consequence any wrong doing by the board or the Government could be criticised.

Mr. S. Stubbs: The money might be borrowed by that time.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (Honorary Minister): That might be so, but that would not wipe out the negligence shown

by the Government in approving of a loan being raised at an unduly high rate of interest. He did not think there was any need for fear, because no board would be likely to borrow unless they could get the money at the lowest possible rate of interest. As a matter of fact, he believed the board were anxious to relieve the local authorities of a good deal of the expenditure they had to meet at the present time. Personally he disapproved of the whole system, but as Parliament approved of there being a fire brigades board, Parliament should give them power to carry on their work to the best advantage. Up to the present time the board had been restricted to their annual revenue and had not been able to raise money for the purpose of extending the facilities throughout the State for protection against fire.

Mr. HOLMAN: This loan had been raised under very favourable circumstances. The interest to be paid was $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. and the debentures would be taken up as the money was required. The loan was practically an overdraft at $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and there would be a sinking fund from which the board would receive interest. The position was amply safeguarded, and the proposal before the Committee contributed to the benefit of the outside bodies to a great extent. Nobody realised more than he as a country member the absolute necessity for attending to the interests of the country people, and as a member of the board he had always made it his duty to see that no district was called upon to pay more than its proper quota of the expenditure. On this occasion he was gratified at securing such good terms for the loan.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You deserve congratulation.

The PREMIER moved an amendment—

That the following words be added to stand as Subclause 4:—"The Governor may make regulations prescribing the mode in which a sinking fund shall be formed for the purpose of paying off such debentures and the amount or rate

of the periodical or other payments to be made into such sinking fund.

At first such provision did not seem necessary. A loan of £50,000 had already been arranged and one of the conditions attaching to the loan was that the board should provide a sinking fund to be paid into an account which would be operated upon by the owners of the debentures. The debenture holders themselves would attend to the investment of the money and he believed they would allow the boards 4 per cent. on the amount in the sinking fund. That was an excellent arrangement, and he was really at a loss to understand how the board had managed it. The result would be that the Governor-in-Council would jump at the opportunity of making regulations to provide that the sinking fund should be paid as desired, but as it was the wish of the Committee to provide for future sinking funds as might be arranged by the Governor-in-Council, he had moved the amendment.

Mr. HOLMAN: The amendment was a wise one, because it might be desirable to adopt a different sinking fund for each loan raised by the board. For instance, on a loan raised for the purpose of erecting a station building, a sinking fund of one or two per cent. might be satisfactory, but on a loan for buying appliances which would be worn out in five or ten years, a much higher sinking fund should be provided. As a member of the board he had advocated the grading of the sinking funds according to the manner in which the principal was spent, so as to secure repayment by way of the sinking fund of any borrowed money during the life of the work or material upon which the loan had been expended. The raising of this loan would to a great extent relieve the heavy pressure on those bodies which were contributing towards the upkeep of the fire brigades in Western Australia.

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

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

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

- 1, Supply (Temporary Advances) £223,145.
- 2, North Fremantle Municipal Tramways Act Amendment.
- 3, Wagin Agricultural Hall Transfer.
- 4, Fremantle Harbour Trust Act Amendment.
- 5, Roads Closure.

BILL.—MINES REGULATION.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 2nd October; Mr. Holman in the Chair, the Minister for Mines in charge of the Bill.

Postponed Clause 40—Mines regulation board:

The MINISTER FOR MINES moved an amendment—

That Subclause 1 be struck out and the following inserted in lieu:—(1.) There shall be a Board to be known as the Mines Regulation Board and to consist of seven members, any five of whom shall be a quorum at any meeting of the Board. (2.) The Board shall consist of—(a.) Three Government officers to be appointed in accordance with the regulations; and (b.) Two members who shall, subject to and in accordance with the regulations, be appointed from time to time and may be removed by the Governor on the nomination or at the request of the owners of mines or the registered unions of mine owners, and with the approval of the Minister, as may be prescribed; and (c.) Two members who shall, subject to and in accordance with the regulations, be appointed from time to time and may be removed by the Governor on the nomination or at the request of the persons employed in mines or the registered unions of mine workers, and with the approval of the Minister, as may be prescribed. (3.) The Minister may, in any particular case, appoint some other Government officer to act as a member

of the board in place of any official member; and the regulations may provide for the nomination and appointment of persons to act as deputy members of the board in place of any of the other members at any meeting of the board.

The amendment had been prepared on the lines practically agreed to with the leader of the Opposition. It simply provided in the Bill what he had intended to do by regulation, for the appointment of three official members of the board to be Government officers and two members to be appointed by a registered union of mine owners and another two by a registered union of employees or by other employees. Subclause 3 met an objection raised by the member for Leonora, inasmuch as it gave power to substitute officers or representatives of the parties in the place of the usual members of the board. It might be inadvisable to have the whole board as permanently constituted journeying to the Murchison to decide some matter of perhaps minor importance; therefore the amendment gave the Minister power to substitute the Inspector for Mines or the Inspector of Machinery, whilst the employers and the employees would also have power to appoint deputy members, instead of being put to the expense of travelling those representatives all the way from their places of permanent residence. He thought the amendment would meet the wishes of the leader of the Opposition.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The amendment was framed as agreed upon. It was a wise provision because it would leave no doubt in the minds of those interested in the industry as to the constitution of the board. If the Bill became law this provision as regarded the board would go a long way towards allaying the feelings of opposition which owners and managers had against the original proposal.

Amendment put and passed.

On motion by the MINISTER FOR MINES clause further amended by striking out the words "shall be nominated and" from Subclause 2.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—LAND VALUATION.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 16th September.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY (Moore): It is now three weeks since we last discussed this Bill. I think it is a pity, when once we get on to an important measure such as this and one which affects all the landed property in this State, that it should not be proceeded with with greater expedition so as to enable hon. members to retain in their minds what has passed during the introduction of the measure. The Premier, in moving the second reading of the Bill, informed the House that there was nothing of a controversial character in the main features, but that the only controversy likely to arise would be as to whether it was a good thing to have uniform valuations or not. I maintain that, if that is the Premier's opinion, he must have known very little about his Bill. The main features of the measure are not controversial. The main features, as he said, are to provide for uniform valuations, and I do not think any member of this House objects to the provision that there should be uniform valuations with regard to all land for taxation purposes, but the sting of the Premier's Bill is in the details and the biggest sting is in the tail itself—the resumption clause. The Premier generally comes forward with his measures in a very jaunty and happy style.

The Premier: I am never sorry over anything that is good.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: He tells us that the measures are innocent; he tries to lead hon. members on this side of the House off the track. No doubt members on the Government side know all about the Premier's Bills before they are brought down, but members of the Opposition know nothing of them until they are presented at the second reading stage. The Premier introduced this Bill as an innocent little measure, an innocent little toy with which we could all play, and which is of no consideration to the people of this country, except from the fact that it is going to produce uniform valuations for

taxation purposes. It is entitled "A Bill for an Act to provide for the periodical valuation of land." That is all right, but it goes on "and for other purposes connected therewith." It is in the "other purposes connected therewith" that the main sting of this Bill lies. The measure in itself is perfectly innocuous until it begins to wag its tail, and when it does wag its tail we find that the Bill is full of stings.

Mr. Underwood: Then delete the tail.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: We find that it is full of provisions which are detrimental to the vested interests of this State, detrimental to those whom we on this side of the House represent a large section of the community, because, all said and done, the vested interests of this country are the main stay of the country, and if the vested interests are not protected, or if confiscation is allowed to creep in when dealing with vested interests, we will be doing something which will shake the whole fabric of the social system to its very foundation.

The Premier: It will do with a lot of shaking.

Mr. George: The Premier will be shaken next election.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: As a Bill dealing with uniform valuations, I am quite certain that members on this side of the House do not object to it, but it is the method of forming those valuations to which I think members on this side of the House will object. Certain things have to be taken into consideration in making the valuations. We are to have a Valuer General and a staff, and in passing I may say that the Premier seems to think there will be no difficulty about this; Government officers are to be appointed for this purpose. The Premier is going to get these officers out of his present staff; the work is to be added to their present duties, but I say that if the work of valuation is to be carried out properly, it will have to be carried out by men who not only have nothing else to do, but who also are experts, because in my opinion the lands of this State are more difficult to value than the lands, perhaps, in any other part of the world.

Whilst dealing with this matter I have not in my mind town lands, because their valuation is a very simple question compared with the valuation of country lands. We have a vast territory here ; we have a vast amount of first class land, but at the same time we have to admit that we have a vast amount of poor country. Mixed up with our first class land is a great deal of this second and third class country. Unless a man is an absolute expert in valuing land, unless he travels over pretty well every acre of the land he has to value, he cannot arrive at a fair and proper valuation of the land, and for that reason the valuation of the land under this measure will cause an interminable amount of work, and, therefore, I contend that this work will not be properly carried out by officers who have other duties in the public service of the State to perform at the same time. With regard to the rules of valuation, provision is made in this Bill—and I cannot believe that the Premier really understands the Bill as the House expects him to understand it. It appears to me, and I have made a close study of it, that the draftsmen have been told to do certain things. They are not practical men; they are men who have a large knowledge—whether good or bad I am not going to say—of law, and no doubt a great knowledge of drafting Bills, but when dealing with the question of land valuation we require to have a large amount of practical knowledge brought to bear with the legal knowledge necessary to frame a satisfactory measure. There are certain rules of valuation laid down in the Bill and one of them states that there shall be no regard had to any machinery fixed to the land. That will distinctly do away with provisions which are already embodied in our Land Taxation Act. I have in my mind country lands only, though it may affect town lands, but the lands which will be affected most largely by the Bill are country lands. It is seldom that land in towns is resumed for public purposes.

The Premier : That is not the main object of the Bill.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY : Never mind.

The Premier : It is the bogey, though.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY : It is seldom that land in towns is resumed for public purposes because there are only certain public purposes for which land can be resumed, but in all our railway Bills provision is made that land can be resumed within 50 miles of the side of the railway, so that therefore in this Land Valuation Bill, dealing with valuations for taxation and resumption purposes, we have to consider in what position a land owner would be placed if the land is to be resumed under one of our railway Acts. In our Land Taxation Act there is a distinct statement of what are to constitute improvements, and it is distinctly laid down that among other things windmills and wells are improvements. In this Bill, and this is one of the stings it contains in its details—it is only a small matter perhaps, but it shows the trend of the measure, and it shows that in this Bill there are provisions lurking which are detrimental to the land owner—windmills are distinctly machinery, and on our country properties there is a large number of windmills. But these windmills are not to be considered as value in valuations under this Bill. I think the Premier was not aware that windmills were to be exempted under this Bill.

The Premier : Absolutely.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY : I am sorry to hear the Premier admit that, because I thought he would be more fair-minded than that, and recognise that a windmill is a fixture, and it would be highly improper that these windmills should not be paid for.

The Premier : A windmill is not a fixture, but could be removed in about two hours.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY : It would cost more to take it away than the windmill is worth. I could go as far as to say, using an Irishism, that in many places the windmill is almost as much a fixture as the well itself. It is a highly improper position to take up under this Bill. The Premier admits that windmills were exempted purposely by him, and I think that is a blow at land owners. This is a

measure dealing only with land owners, and every possible consideration should be given to those who are brought under its operations. It is not the duty of members of this Parliament to bring measures here and have in their minds all that can be got out of the people who own land. In connection with this Bill we ought to consider what is the fairest thing that can be done for these people, and what is the fairest thing we can possibly do in justice to the country as a whole. There is another provision, and I think it is one of the most confiscatory in its nature that we have in the Bill, and that is this: that no regard is to be had to any metals, minerals, gems, precious stones, coal, mineral oil, or phosphatic substances contained or supposed to be contained in the land. This is distinctly taking away rights that were granted by the Crown in the past.

Mr. Underwood: They are taken away by the provisions of the Mining Act relating to mining on private property.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: These are rights granted by the Crown and they have never been taken away.

Mr. Underwood: They have never been granted.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: Will the hon. member for Pilbara please keep quiet. I know more about the question than the hon. member for Pilbara, who, as a matter of fact, shows by his remarks that he knows absolutely nothing about it, and it would be much better for him in his own interest, and the interests of the House, to let me say what I have to say in regard to this subject, and then to continue the debate afterwards. Prior to responsible Government our land laws always appeared in the form of regulations. The last regulations passed were those of 1887. Those regulations distinctly provided that the Crown alone reserved the right to the gold and silver and other precious metals, and under these Crown grants it was stated in the title deed that these were the only rights reserved by the Crown, and consequently all right to the baser metals and anything else beneath or above the ground was the property of the freeholder.

Member: The cockie never opened a mine yet.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: That is not the question, but the "cockies," as the hon. member elects to call the farmers of this country, are the men who are making Western Australia, and will continue to make Western Australia when many other industries have ceased to exist. The whole of the country from Albany up the Great Southern line, and up to Geraldton, and land in the Eastern districts, was granted simply with the gold, silver, and other precious metals reserved to the Crown. We know that even at Greenbushes, where tin mining has gone on for many years, a great many of the tin mines are freehold, and have been worked on freehold land, and do not come under the Mineral Lands Act in any way whatever. Those owners of land have no provisions to carry out with regard to exemption, forfeiture, or anything else contained in the Mineral Lands Act.

Mr. Green: A short-sighted policy.

Mr. H. B. LEFROY: Whether short-sighted or not, I do not think this House has any right to confiscate property or resume property without recompensing the people who own that property for all they own in it.

The Premier: This is not a Bill for the resumption of land.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: The main sting of this Bill is in its tail, and I will be able to show this House when I proceed further how the question of resumption is affected. I consider that it is a highly improper thing that rights which exist in property should be taken away in this off-handed manner, and no consideration at all given to those rights which property owners were given by the Crown.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: Are they not to receive the value of them under this Bill?

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: No value whatever; no consideration whatever is to be given for any phosphate rock or any materials that exist in the ground. I am not going to say they exist there, but they may exist, and these rights, even if they may be only imaginary, have been granted by the Crown and we ought to respect them. We look on the Crown as the high-

est authority in this State and the British Dominions—at any rate members on this side of the House do—and we always have a jealous regard for rights that have been granted by the Crown. This Parliament has no right to take away those rights that have been extended to people in the past.

The Premier: We do not propose to.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: The Premier says they do not propose to. Then what is the good of putting it in the Bill?

The Premier: We are not putting it in the Bill.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: The Bill distinctly states that no regard shall be had to any of these things.

The Premier: For what purpose?

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: I am coming to that directly. All the land of the Midland Railway Company was granted to them with the rights to all these materials and metals.

The Premier: No.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: I know a great deal more about this than the Premier does. The Midland Railway Company in granting their freeholds now have reserved to themselves all those rights which were given to them by the Crown before. I daresay the Government are not aware of this, but the Midland Railway Company in disposing of their land reserve to themselves all the metals, minerals and precious stones which the Government desire, under this Bill, to take away from the people to whom these rights were granted in the past. The Midland Railway Company did this because, when we first had a Lands Act passed in this State, in 1898, it was provided in the Crown grants or freehold tenure that the Crown reserved all the rights, not only to gold and silver and other precious metals, but to all these minerals, etcetera, as well, and consequently as the Midland Railway Company had these rights given to them when the land was granted to them in the 'eighties, they decided they were going to place themselves in the same position as the Government, so that if anyone wanted to mine on land belonging to the Midland Railway Company, they had to go to the Midland Railway Company, who are in

the same position as the Government and can only give the right to mine on that country.

Mr. Monger: On different conditions from the Government though,

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: I am only pointing out that this is a case where these rights have been reserved. The Premier, in introducing the measure, spoke at some length on the question of resumption, and said if a Bill of this kind was needed in New Zealand, it was equally necessary here. We have been told by the hon. member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell), who has made a study of the New Zealand Act, that this measure is not on all-fours with it, and if it was framed on the same lines as the New Zealand Act, he would not have the same objection to it. The Premier informed the House that he knew of instances where land was valued at a low figure for taxation purposes, but when the Government came in with a view to resumption, the owner raised the value 500 per cent. No one desires such a thing as that to take place, and it seems to me rather an out of the way valuation. I have never heard of properties being raised 500 per cent. for valuation purposes, but as the Premier has told the House this I daresay that there have been some cases of that sort. I have mentioned some of the stings which lurk in this Bill, and improper provisions which are, I think, of a confiscatory character. Perhaps some hon. members in this House are of opinion that those people who own property are robbers. I know that that is the feeling of one class of thought, that all people who own property are robbers, and that there should be some means devised to wrest this property from the individuals who possess it. I hope hon. members on the other side of the House have not such a poor opinion of vested interests in this country, and of the justice that ought to be meted out to these people, but when one finds provisions such as I have mentioned in a Bill of this sort, one is led to think there is very little consideration given to the landowner. The Premier, in introducing the Bill, is laying himself out to get all he can from those people

who own property. He has told the House that there will be every opportunity given for objecting to the valuations made by the Valuer General. In the first instance the Valuer General, when a district is appointed—of course I know that this Bill only applies to such parts of the State as are proclaimed districts under the Act, but it is intended to bring all the districts in the State under the measure, and to my way of thinking the sooner that is done the better—I was saying that the Valuer General will go out and value the land. It is distinctly stated how he is to value the land. He is told what is to be the improved value and what is to be the unimproved value. He is also told that in making valuations he is not to have any regard for certain things, amongst them the machinery on the land, metals and precious stones, etc., to which I have already referred. Having made the valuation, he has to publish a notice in the *Government Gazette*, and he has also to give notice to the owner, and the owner can object just as he can now, but he is allowed to make up this valuation every year. On the second occasion when the Valuer General makes it up he is not obliged to give notice to the owner; all he has to do is to publish a notice in the *Gazette*.

Mr. George: Who sees the *Gazette*?

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: That may be all very well for business people and those who live in towns, but for those who own land in the country I do not think that the *Gazette* notice is sufficient.

Mr. S. Stubbs: They never see the *Gazette*.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: The people mainly affected never see the *Gazette*. There may be some of us in the State who are business people and who attend to these things, but the ordinary man on the land does not worry. He gets his taxation papers sent in and he pays his taxes. He grumbles but goes like a good British subject and pays; in many instances too he grumbles with good cause. In many cases, the unfortunate people who have not a thorough knowledge of these matters pay on a higher value than they ought to do.

Every day improvements are being made on country property. Every man in the country puts in every penny he can beg or borrow—I should only say borrow, because the man in the country is too proud to beg: but he will borrow all he can so as to improve his property because he knows very well that unless he spends money in the direction of improving his property his efforts will come to an end. Improvements, therefore, are always going on, and he does not go to the Registrar every year to tell him that he has carried out so many improvements and that his land has consequently been enhanced in value to a larger extent than was the case previously. Now we come to the question of resumptions. A railway is put through the country and the Government have power under the Railway Act—a power which I am surprised at a Liberal Government putting through—to resume land without any consideration, in blocks of a thousand acres or more within 15 miles of a line.

The Premier: Did the Liberal Government do that?

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: Yes, and it was a dreadful thing to do. The question of resumptions is one of the most important matters in this Bill. I have no objection to the question of uniform valuations, but I have told the Premier that the main sting in the Bill is that referring to resumptions.

Mr. George: Robbery!

Mr. Thomas: It is the best provision in the Bill.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: The improved value does not affect the man who pays the tax; he pays only on the unimproved value, and if that satisfies him he does not care about the improved value. He does not realise the fact that the land may be resumed and consequently he does not worry about the question of the improved value of the land. The ordinary man in the country does not consider Acts of Parliament; he knows little about these things; he generally has so much to do that he cannot be studying statutes. All he knows is that he has to pay a tax on the unimproved value of his land. When it comes to the question of resump-

tion the basis of valuation is to be the valuation on the register. The Premier has told us that owners will have the right to appeal, but they will have no right to appeal against this valuation. The land will be resumed under the Public Works Act, and all the procedure provided by that Act will have to be carried out, but the court is told distinctly that the value as it appears on the register is to be the correct value of the land. That is mandatory, and if that valuation appears there, the court must accept it. The Premier has stated that owners of property to be resumed have the right in the first instance of appealing against the valuation fixed. Under this Bill there is no such right of appeal. They have the right to appeal when the value is fixed by the Valuer General but they have no right to appeal when the land is resumed for public purposes. The Premier has told us that owners of property have the right of appealing against the value fixed, and that that right is reserved for 12 months. I do not think that the Premier understands this question of appeal. I do not for one moment wish to infer that it is the Premier's desire to mislead the House, but he distinctly stated that an owner had the right to appeal reserved for 12 months, that he could appeal against any alteration however small, that he must be notified of any alteration made, and that he had his rights under the Public Works Act, but as I have pointed out there is no notice to be sent to the owner after the notice he gets in the first instance. I consider it ought to be sent every time, and I hope that when the Bill is in Committee the Premier will agree to an amendment in this regard. When we come to the question of appealing against a valuation for resumption purposes there is no appeal whatever against the value on the register. That has to be taken by the court as the basis of valuation. I think that is an improper thing. All sorts of things come into the question of the value of property. Many properties held by people in this State are the homes of those people, and the only homes which they have, often the result of hard work

and toil and a lifelong struggle. If people find that their land is wrested from them, all the compensation that the Government can give to those who have fought a hard battle on their properties will not prevent them from going to an untimely grave. In my opinion the value of the land is the value which it is to the man who owns it, and not the face value. In this Bill there is every provision for making the improved value of the land as low as possible. There is no appeal, although the Premier has told us that there is an appeal. There is no appeal when the matter of resumption comes before the court. There is no appeal except through other courts. The Bill distinctly states that the value for resumption purposes shall be the valuation appearing in the current register.

The Premier: That does not prevent an appeal.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: There is no appeal against it. No appeal is provided in the Public Works Act.

The Premier: But there is in the Bill.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: One can only appeal from one court to another. The Premier cannot point out where there is any appeal in the Bill against a valuation made on the register, when the time comes for resumption. There is, of course, an appeal against the valuation on the register when annually made but, as I have pointed out, after the first valuation there is no appeal. Nor is there any provision in the Bill for notice to be given to the owners. Furthermore, as I have pointed out, the unimproved value of the land is all that affects the individual for taxation purposes, and is what he thinks about principally when he finds his land valued; but when it comes to a question of resumption, what affects him is the improvement value of the land, and the court must accept the improvement value that is on the register as the true and correct valuation. I am quite certain that if the Bill passes in its present form we will deal a great blow to the vested interests of the country, and that any such blow can only be detrimental to the interests of the country as a whole. In a country like this we want security in property. If we do not

have it we will not get money to invest on that property, nor will we get people to come here to invest their money either. The more provisions of this kind we introduce, the more will we tend to drive settlement off the land, and to discourage people from coming to the country to open up the land for the benefit of the people as a whole. I hope the Premier will study the Bill and do all he can to remove the stings I have referred to, and principally the sting which is in the tail of the Bill. Unless he does this, he will not be acting in the best interests of the land owners. In my opinion the Government have a right to consider the Bill as mostly concerning land owners, and therefore the land owners ought to be considered in every legitimate way. The land owners do not desire undue consideration, but they wish to retain the rights which have been reserved to them in the past by the Crown, and which no Government have the right to take away without very good reasons. Such reasons are not given in the Bill, and certainly they were not given by the Premier when he was dealing with the question. In Committee members on this side will require to look into the provisions of the Bill and endeavour to point out to the Premier the dangers I have referred to. I hope he may be induced to believe that there is some justice in members on this side, and that we have a higher consideration than that of our own interests, and that in endeavouring to conserve the interests of private property, we are endeavouring to conserve the interests of those who have done so much for the State in the past, and who in future must remain and constitute the backbone of the country, no matter what may happen to the country. I hope proper consideration will be given to the land owners, and that the Premier will withdraw from the Bill some of those stings to which I have alluded.

Mr. UNDERWOOD (Pilbara): I rise in an endeavour to prove to the House and the hon. member that I do know something about the Land Act. It is quite usual for members of the Opposition, immediately a member on this side informs them of anything, to turn round and say,

"He knows nothing about it; he is speaking entirely in ignorance." The hon. member asserted that the land holders have the rights to the minerals on the land.

Hon. H. B. Lefroy: I said "had the rights."

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I say they have not. I will read to the House the last couple of sentences in a Crown grant.

Hon. H. B. Lefroy: That is the present Crown grant. I was referring to the old one.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: This is how it reads—

We do hereby save and reserve to us, our heirs and successors, all mines of gold, silver, copper, tin, or other metals, ore and mineral, or other substances containing metals, and all gems or precious stones and coal or mineral oil and all phosphatic substances in and under the said land with full liberty at all times to search and dig for and carry away the same; and for that purpose to enter upon the said lands or any part thereof.

The hon. member stands there and claims that the land owners have bought the minerals on the land. They never bought them. What I wish to point out to the member for Moore (Hon. H. B. Lefroy) is that when he purchased that land of his, he did not purchase the minerals, and that it is following the old system of land ownership to assume that one owns them. As a matter of fact it is provided that the Government can go upon the land for the purpose of taking timber, gravel, stone or anything required for any work, and take it without compensation, for railways, railway stations, bridges, and almost any utility at all. They can resume land in the rural areas without any compensation whatever.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Not they.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: An ex-Minister for Lands is talking now.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: Very much ex.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You never were and never will be ex anything.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Another clause of the Crown grant reads as follows:—

Provided nevertheless that it shall at all times be lawful for us, our heirs and

successors, or for any person or persons acting in that behalf by our or their authority, to resume and enter upon possession of any part of the said land which it may at any time by us, our heirs and successors, be deemed necessary to resume for roads, tramways, railways, railway stations, bridges, canals, towing paths, harbour or river improvement works, drainage or irrigation works or quarries, and generally for any other works or purposes of public use, utility or convenience, and for the purpose of exercising the power to search for minerals hereinafter reserved and such lands so resumed to hold to us our heirs and successors, as of our or their former estate without making to the said grantee heirs and assigns any compensation in respect thereof.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Wrong.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: The hon. gentleman administered the Lands Department for some six years, yet he does not know what is in a Crown grant. These are the conditions on which the State has sold the land, the conditions on which the lands have been obtained by the people from the State; yet we find the hon. gentleman complaining that he should have all rights, that he should have not only the right in compensation, but the right of imposition in the way of compensation. There is no shadow of doubt in my mind that the land owners do absolutely make a point of imposing upon the Government. Whenever the Government desire to resume land for public purposes, the land holders charge most exorbitant prices for it. If their land is for sale legitimately, and they hear that the Government desire to buy it, they immediately raise the price to the Government. The very fact that the Government are resuming land in an area raises the price of land in that area. There is no doubt that the land owners always endeavour to anticipate where the Government are going to resume land; and they do that on top of the fact that they have no right whatever to compensation. This idea seems to come of the old style of owning land. The hon. gentleman suggested that members on this side of the

House were of opinion that all land owners are robbers. As a matter of fact, all English land owners are robbers. They absolutely stole that land from the people of England, they obtained that land by enclosing it. The lands of England at one time belonged, in the first place, nominally to the King, really to the people, and the big land holder of England to-day is simply a robber who fenced in the people's land and claimed it.

Mr. George: Nothing of the sort.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I have just one other word to say. The impression given by hon. members of the Opposition is ever that they are the only people on earth who have any land. They say, "Hon. members on that side want to rob us who own land." As a matter of fact there are more land owners on this side of the House than on that, and any law which affects land owners most materially affects the members on this side of the House. When the hon. gentleman claims that he is doing this in the interests of the owners of land, I think we can claim that we are looking after the interests of land owners, being owners of land ourselves, but that, on the other hand, we want to give some attention to the vast majority of people who are not owners of land, and that we do not admit that because a man owns a block of land, he owns all the people of Western Australia.

Mr. THOMAS (Bunbury): I was rather surprised in listening to the very staid and highly respectable member for Moore (Hon. H. B. Lefroy) to hear him give vent to certain opinions. He has always been so very courteous to members on this side of the House that I was very much surprised indeed to hear the hon. member state, by inference, that we on this side thought that all people who owned land in this country were robbers—putting into our mouths an assertion that I am sure not one of us ever thought of giving expression to. It is only in the minds of certain hon. members that these bogies exist. Certain minds are essentially suspicious, but I am surprised that that hon. gentleman did not keep his suspicions for a more fitting place. Now, in pleading the woes of the poor

unfortunate land owner, the hon. member attempted at times to become pathetic, but only succeeded in becoming ridiculous. He was more attractive to my way of thinking when he assumed that light and jaunty air at the commencement of his remarks. However, I want to say in regard to this Bill that it contains two or three provisions which appeal very strongly to me, and the very clause that the hon. member so strongly objects to is the one that appeals to me most. I think the Premier deserves to be congratulated upon having thought of that clause and having introduced it in the way he has done. We were told in the midst of a lot of other statements about precious stones, windmills, and other things, that it was very doubtful, so far as I could gather from a generally involved statement, as to whether the landowner really had any appeal of any value at all, and the burden of the hon. member's plea was "Why should he not have the right of appeal just before resumption took place."

Mr. George : So he ought.

Mr. THOMAS : Of course he ought from the hon. member's point of view. It did not matter much if the landowner went on for 20 years paying taxation on a low valuation of his land, and depriving the Government and other bodies of their just taxation over those years—it mattered nothing; but when it came to a question of disposing of this person's piece of Western Australian soil, he should have the right of appeal and boost it up to the highest possible price he could get.

Hon. H. B. Lefroy : The Premier said that he had the right of appeal.

Mr. THOMAS : So he has, every year. How much oftener does he want to appeal ? The hon. member would be content, no matter how low the valuation of the land was, because the taxation would be so much less. It seems to me such a selfish view to take of the matter, when the hon. member says, "It does not matter for taxation purposes. Let us get at the Government as much as we can, and through the Government the people of Western Australia. But

when the Government want to buy then comes our chance to boost the property up and get at them again by demanding the highest price we can get." I do take exception to the fact that hon. members on the Opposition side of the House have been continually throwing out the accusation that the Premier has not read the Bill. Yet in throwing out those accusations they reveal such a lamentable evidence of their own want of knowledge that it becomes really appalling. One would think that before making accusations against others, they would at least make some attempt to become reasonably familiar with the Bill themselves.

Mr. George : Are you familiar with it ?

Mr. THOMAS : More familiar than the hon. member is, and that is not very much. Now in one little portion of his speech the member for Moore stated that there was absolutely no notice to be sent to the landowner.

Hon. H. B. Lefroy : I object to that; that is not correct.

Mr. THOMAS : The hon. member made that statement in the first instance but he may have corrected it later.

Hon. H. B. Lefroy : No.

Mr. THOMAS : I accept the hon. member's assurance, but I must be growing deaf. Clause 13 certainly says that "the Valuer General shall also deliver or send by post, etcetera." That is plain enough, but the hon. gentleman can get further information by perusing the clause for himself. Just for a moment let us look at the value of this Bill. When I first read through the measure I thought to myself "Well, we have had a good many tirades of abuse from the Opposition during this session, but at last we have reached a haven of refuge. Here is at last one point upon which the Government and Opposition will surely be in accord, and have a chance, figuratively speaking, of falling into each other's arms." Such, however, is not the case. Even the most innocent and beneficial measure we can introduce meets with a storm of opposition and abuse. It cannot be denied that if by means of this Bill—and I claim it can be done—we can

secure a uniform system of valuation right throughout Western Australia, we will have achieved a worthy and commendable object.

Hon. J. Mitchell: We approve of that desire.

Mr. THOMAS: There is very little of approval in the hon. member's speech.

Mr. George: We all approve of the Bill.

Mr. THOMAS: I am glad to hear now at this late hour that the hon. member approves of that much.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Of uniform valuations, certainly.

Mr. THOMAS: I was trying to make out the case that by virtue of the fact that so much benefit would be derived from a uniform system of valuations throughout Western Australia, much of the cost of administering the Act—I admit that the expense will be considerable—will be saved in various ways. There is no doubt that at the present time a great deal of money is expended by the Taxation Department in checking the values of property. There is no doubt also that the measure will be of some value to the Agricultural Bank. It will be invaluable to all local governing bodies; and it will have this value above all others, that the valuation of land throughout all the districts of local governing bodies will be made by somebody outside of those districts and entirely free from local influences. A fair and more just valuation will be obtained and the local governing bodies will be given a better knowledge of what their revenue is likely to be. There is one feature of the Bill, with all its virtues, that I have some misgiving about. That is, that it will be some time before the measure can be put into operation, and the whole of the lands of Western Australia valued. I am satisfied of this, that even if the clauses dealing with repurchased estates were struck out, the Bill would still have a considerable influence in restraining land owners from putting up an imposition on the Government with regard to the price of land when resumption took place. If they have sought, as they have in many instances, to have the value of their land

reduced, in order to avoid taxation, they would be in a very weak position when it came to a question later on of appealing to have the value raised much higher, in order to extort money from the Government. The hon. member for Northam struck a most original idea when he said that the valuation should be arrived at on a basis satisfactory to the owner of the land. That is original; there is no doubt about it, the hon. member must have had assistance or he could never have given birth to such an original conception. If we can only make a Bill that will be entirely satisfactory to the Taxation Department and other departments, and yet fix a value which will be perfectly satisfactory to the man who owns the land, we will have reached the age of miracles and the hon. member will then be promoted to the exalted position he merits. If we put a value on the land satisfactory to the owner we would have it down to the minimum for taxation, and if we gave him satisfaction when we were going to resume, up would go the value of the land 5,000 per cent. Then how are we going to give him satisfaction? I am inclined to think that it was a little mental lapse on the part of the hon. member when he gave expression to that proposal. The hon. member again displayed his profound knowledge of the Bill when he stated that the land owner had absolutely no right of appeal.

Hon. J. Mitchell: I said absolutely nothing of the sort.

Mr. THOMAS: I beg the hon. member's pardon. He said there was no right of annual appeal, whereas Clauses 15 to 17 are absolutely clear on the subject; yet the hon. member posed as having such a profound knowledge of the Bill.

Mr. George: But who sees the *Government Gazette*?

The Premier: Never mind the *Gazette*, read the Bill.

Mr. THOMAS: I quote that fact only because I want to show it as absolute evidence that the hon. member could not have read the Bill.

Hon. J. Mitchell: I have read every Bill introduced this session, and this one half a dozen times.

Mr. THOMAS: Then the hon. member must be lacking in intelligence. That, perhaps, is an unkind thing to say, but there must be something wrong if the hon. member read the Bill and then did not understand it, because it is a marvel of clearness and is perfectly easy to understand. That is why I happen to be talking upon it. The hon. member for Northam—I always like quoting what he says—drew rather a gloomy picture as to the effect this Bill was going to have on the financial interests of Western Australia. He said in effect that the Government valuer would not put his valuations up sufficiently high, and in consequence, they would be lower than the valuations put on by the chartered banks. That is another brilliant idea.

Hon. J. Mitchell: I do not think I said that at all.

Mr. THOMAS: I am not allowed to quote from *Hansard*, but I have no doubt what the hon. member said. He said that it would have a very serious and dangerous influence on the financial stability of Western Australia.

Mr. George: What page of *Hansard*?

Mr. THOMAS: I do not know. Will the hon. gentleman kindly get some knowledge for himself?

Mr. George: Why did you refer to it?

Mr. THOMAS: I am not allowed to read pages of *Hansard* to the hon. gentleman.

Mr. George: You have read it in your speech.

Mr. THOMAS: I did not read it; I have quoted it from memory; I have such an excellent memory. I want to point out again, if the hon. gentleman will only give me half a chance, how absurd and ridiculous it is to say that the Government valuer, putting a genuine and equitable value on the land, will put on a value lower than the chartered banks of this State. I wonder if anyone would believe such a statement as that. As a matter of fact we know that the banks will put on an exceedingly conservative estimate, a very low estimate; the lower it is the better it is for their purposes. So I do not see why the hon. gentleman should have any fear on that particular point. I

tried to make some notes from the speech of the hon. member for Moore, and I have got down a few headings such as "confiscation," "robbery," "sting in its tail," and a few other things of that description. They seemed to form the substance of the matter of the hon. gentleman's oration. I do not see any reason why such assertions should be made. It seems to me that in connection with every Bill introduced into this House, no matter how harmless its principles, no matter how very carefully, thoughtfully, honestly or honourably drafted, we have this weary hoary-headed old gag about confiscation. Everything that does not ladle out the gold of the Treasury to the man on the land savours of confiscation—confiscation all the time. That is the burden of their song; that is the bogey of their lives.

Mr. Underwood: Did you call it a song?

Mr. THOMAS: It would be a song for some of them.

Mr. George: Where did you get that?

Mr. THOMAS: I will take my oath that I did not get it from the hon. gentleman, because he has no ideas to give me.

Mr. George: It slipped through my mind at the same time.

The Premier: Most things do slip through your mind.

Mr. THOMAS: Yes, if it is anything good it will easily slip through the hon. member's mind.

Mr. George: I like to give away so much.

Mr. THOMAS: That is so. I have not anything more of any importance to say on this matter.

Mr. George: Hear, hear!

Mr. THOMAS: In view of the hon. member's "hear, hear," I think I will continue for another half hour. I want to say that I would very much indeed have liked to have heard some genuine criticism from members of the Opposition, and not criticism like that of the leader of the Opposition, when he said he had not read a word of the Bill, and then proceeded to treat us to a long discourse on the principles of the Bill, and when the Premier corrected him on a certain point he stated

the hon. member for Northam had said it. Where could we get a less reliable authority than the hon. member for Northam? It is on such a flimsy basis as this that the principal clauses of this Bill were attacked by my hon. friend. When speaking the other day the hon. member for Murray-Wellington gave the Bill his blessing and said that in many respects it was a most desirable measure. Since that is the case, I feel perfectly satisfied that the last word on the question has been said.

Mr. WISDOM (Claremont): I am sorry to disappoint the hon. member for Bunbury in his wish that the last word has been said on this Bill.

Mr. Thomas: It is not my wish; I am only too pleased to hear you.

Mr. WISDOM: Not that I have very much to say on the matter, but there are one or two points which perhaps have not been touched upon by other speakers which I would like to mention. The Premier has certainly got hold of a good idea, so far as his purpose is to secure a uniform valuation for taxation purposes only, and if the Bill had adhered to that main idea and the machinery had been made workable, I do not think any objection would have been raised to the Bill. Unfortunately a proposal has been imported into the measure which is entirely foreign to the main idea, and which I think is bad in principle, and not only that, but one which will make the operations of the Bill very cumbersome and costly, if not impracticable. The main object of the Bill, one valuation for taxation purposes, is a very sound one and we must admit that a uniform valuation would be sufficient for all taxation purposes at present in this State. There is no doubt that when such a valuation is completed throughout the whole of the State and is working smoothly and well, it will be economical and of great value to the country, but to use the same valuation for resumption purposes is altogether absurd. The basis of valuations for taxation, as has been said by the hon. member for Moore, is either on the unimproved or annual value, and it is only in the case of the municipalities that the

annual value is used. Parenthetically, I may say I hope that shortly the Government will bring down a measure to amend the Municipalities Act to do away with the annual value. If that were done the valuation for taxation right through the State would be on the unimproved value. At the present time, and the same thing would be likely to occur under this Bill, improvements are not valued with sufficient care to make the valuation of any use whatever for the purpose of resumption. The valuations made at present are notoriously inaccurate so far as their use for fixing the purchase price of property is concerned, but they are considered to be near enough for ordinary taxation purposes. I do not suggest that valuations for taxation purposes should not be as accurate as for purchase or resumption, but we know such is not the case in practice.

Mr. Turvey: But provision is made in this Bill for a special valuation for resumption.

Mr. WISDOM: Under a wholesale system of valuation such as is proposed in this Bill we are not likely to get that care exercised in the valuation of improvements which is absolutely necessary and fair for resumption purposes, except at enormous cost of time and money. It would really mean that the valuers would have to practically hold little courts of their own to determine the careful and detailed valuation necessary for resumption purposes. The idea to me is almost like using a steam hammer to crack a nut, because there will necessarily be an enormous number of valuations made all over the State, and out of that enormous number only a very small percentage will be used for the purpose of resumption. Therefore, why should we go to the unnecessary cost and labour of making valuations of every property in the State such as would be required in the event of resumption? It means doubling or trebling the work of the valuers just for the sake of the very few resumptions which are likely to be made. Further, in the case of resumption, it is not altogether the question of valuation which determines the compensation to be paid.

We know that the basis on which compensation is fixed is the basis of damage, and although the valuation is necessarily an important part of the compensation, it is usually that portion which is most easily determined. Where damage has to be estimated there are other things besides the valuation which have to be taken into consideration, and where a difference arose, as would generally be the case, this question would have to be decided after all by the court. As the case must go to the court, surely it would be simpler, easier, and much less costly to allow the court to determine the whole thing as under the present system. It would be much fairer to adhere to the provisions of the Public Works Act which at present obtain. If, as the Premier stated, opportunities are given for fraud or for the valuation to be put up just previous to resumption, surely the correct method to remedy that is not to embody it in a Bill of this description but to amend the Public Works Act. The hon. member for Bunbury talks of bogeys: I think this is one of the bogeys which have been trotted out repeatedly in this House, and there is no significance in it whatever because in the end it is a question for the court to decide the value.

The Premier: Absolute roguery takes place in connection with some resumptions.

Mr. WISDOM: That is the fault of the Public Works Act.

The Premier: No, it is not.

Mr. WISDOM: And it can be remedied by an amendment of the Public Works Act. Surely the Premier and the Government, with the assistance of the departments, have sufficient ingenuity to draft an amendment to overcome any roguery which has been or may be, attempted in this direction.

The Premier: Your memory is at fault.

Mr. WISDOM: The proposal in this Bill is extremely unfair. It gives the Government a distinct advantage over the land owner, the individual. While considering this portion of the Bill it occurred to me to suppose that a rich

corporation was in the happy position of being able to compel land owners to give them a twelve months' option of purchase over their property. If such were the case one can quite imagine what a particularly good wicket that corporation would be on. This is exactly the position which the Government are seeking to put the land owner into. If the Government decide to resume any land, and if the value is increased or the original valuation is too low, the Government can hold the owner to the original valuation, which might be twelve months old. But on the other hand if the value had decreased during that period of 12 months, or the original valuation was too high, the Government could simply step in and make a revaluation and throw the whole thing into the court. In that way the Government have the right of appeal against the owner, but the owner has no right of appeal against the Government, that is, at least for 12 months.

The Premier: That is not a correct interpretation or reading of the Bill.

Mr. WISDOM: It is a correct interpretation. I think that when the Premier goes into the Bill from that point of view he will see that it is a perfectly correct interpretation, and that that is how it will work out in practice. I am not concerned so much for the keen business man who, after all, is accustomed to watch his interests closely, and is in the way of getting timely notice of any valuations or alterations in valuation, and who is also keen enough to take care that his valuation is correct, both from the point of view of taxation and resumption; but the people who are going to suffer most under this Bill are the working man owner of property and the out-back settler. As has been stated by the hon. member for Moore (Hon. H. B. Lefroy), there is not the least doubt that those are the people who will suffer, those who in most cases will accept the valuation given by the Valuer General rather than go through the ordeal of appealing, and in most cases those people will have absolutely no knowledge of Clause 41. Probably they will only wake up

when they get notice of resumption. The Premier quoted the New Zealand Act extensively during his second reading speech on this Bill, and he left the impression in my mind from what he said that the same clause dealing with resumption existed in the New Zealand Act. I find, however, on looking through it that this clause does not exist in the New Zealand Act.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs : What clause is that ?

Mr. WISDOM : Clause 41. I merely want to point out that the New Zealand Act which has been so much quoted in connection with this Bill, has not got that provision whatsoever. The Premier pointed out that the New Zealand Act has done an immense lot of good, and I have not the least doubt that if the Premier had adhered more closely to the New Zealand Act and had left out those objectionable portions which are quite foreign to that Act, there would be no difficulty about the passing of this Bill.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs : Apart from resumption, don't you think the New Zealand Act more stringent than this ?

Mr. WISDOM : I do not think so. Leaving that aspect of the question, I think the proposal to make the valuation of districts so that they will be brought one by one under the operation of the measure is extremely objectionable. The Premier has correctly, I think, estimated that it will take something like four or five years to complete the valuation for the whole State. That means that certain districts will have during these four or five years a distinct advantage over other districts. For instance, an owner in the metropolitan area will be brought under the Bill four years before an owner of property, we will say for instance, in the North-West or Kimberley. It is evident, therefore, that so far as the bringing of the Bill into operation is concerned, that the time is premature for five years at least. If it will take five years to complete the valuations the Bill will have a diametrically opposite effect to that which is intended, and instead of a uniform system of valuation it will create a less uniform system of

valuation than exists at the present time. I think also that the cost, or at least during these four or five years, is not going to be materially reduced because the Valuer General will after all have to employ largely the present valuers or local authorities to make his first valuation. Shortly, I think there are only two ways in which this idea could be brought into operation here, one being to make a valuation of the whole State at once, as soon as can be done, and before the proclamation of the Act. That, of course, would be an extremely costly process. The other way, which I think is more reasonable, is for the Taxation Department, which is at present carrying out a valuation for the purposes of the land tax, should be allowed to go on gradually with its valuation, and when that valuation is complete let the Bill come into operation. In conclusion I want to repeat that I think the main idea of the measure is an extremely good one, and if it is properly and fairly worked out it is going to be a great advantage to this State. I hope the Premier will try to be reasonable in Committee, and accept amendments which will make the Bill acceptable and workable.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS (Subiaco) : I consider that this measure is another evidence of the energy and ability which the Government have brought to bear in their endeavour to institute a methodical system in connection with affairs of State, instead of allowing them to go on in the lackadaisical manner which existed in the past. While we have half a dozen different Government departments and local governing bodies making valuations of land, each adopting a different method, and each arriving at a different result, nothing but confusion can be the outcome with regard to the true value of land, and when we find, as the leader of the Opposition mentioned the other evening, that local governing bodies unduly inflate their valuations, then that confusion must undoubtedly be accentuated. There is no doubt, I think, in the minds of those who have gone into the question, that local governing bodies do unduly inflate their valuations, if not for the ulterior motive which

the hon. member stated, at least for the purpose of decreasing the incidence of their taxation. They know well that intending residents, before they build or purchase, are concerned as to the amount of rates which are collected in any locality and these intending residents in a locality have no way of finding out what the rates are except by taking the amount in the pound as they find it on the rate list, and they do not concern themselves to find out whether, the incidence of taxation being high, the valuation may be lower or *vice versa*. We find, in order to overcome that and to make intending settlers or residents, especially in municipalities, believe that the rates they will have to pay are low, that many municipalities in particular make their valuations high so that they can keep the incidence of their taxation low, and this undoubtedly operates very unfairly and unjustly against adjoining local governing bodies. This measure, if it has the effect which I have no doubt it will, will bring about a uniform valuation of land, and that uniform valuation will be the true valuation of the land, as under the system which is laid down in the Bill for finding the unimproved value or the improved or the annual value, there is no question that the value arrived at will be the true value of the land, that is the price at which the land would sell at the time the valuation is made.

Hon. J. Mitchell: It might be uniform, but not correct.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: It must be true if it is in accordance with the principles of the Bill, as it is laid down that the unimproved value which is placed in the register must be the value at which a bona fide seller would be willing to sell and a bona fide purchaser would be willing to purchase the land. That is the only way we can arrive at the true value of it. So we find that not only will we have uniform valuations, but these uniform valuations will be based on the true valuation of the land. This is not only going to be of benefit to the Government in their various departments, and of benefit to local governing bodies, but immeasurably cheaper to all concerned. An hon. member spoke

about it costing something like £60,000 to bring about these valuations, but how any person can say that one department, organised and carrying out this work on a systematic plan, is going to make it more expensive than where we have half a dozen different bodies carrying out valuation spasmodically, often two or three of them going over the same ground and making valuations of the same property, passes my comprehension. It is logical and only common sense to imagine that where one body is systematically doing the work it must be an immeasurably cheaper system than that which exists at the present time.

Mr. Green: There is a saving of £11,700 a year under the water supply and sewerage amalgamation.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: And undoubtedly there must be a saving here. It is all moonshine for hon. members to get up and say that a uniform system is going to be more expensive than where there is a lot of overlapping. It must be cheaper where one body does the work, and it is not only going to benefit the Government and local governing bodies, but it is going to benefit the public, and I think this is one of the "stings" of which a number of hon. members opposite are afraid. It is going to show to members of the public who desire to purchase land what the true value of that land is. They will be able on payment of a small fee to ascertain the true value of the land instead of having to go to a land agent and pay a large fee to have the land valued, and by getting the value which will be placed on it by the Valuer General and his officers they will be able to see whether the price asked of them is reasonable or not. The hon. member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) delivered a very lengthy speech in opposition to this measure, but I want to say that in my opinion his criticism was both inconsistent and unreliable. It was inconsistent, because in the first place he stated that the Bill would have the effect of destroying security.

Hon. J. Mitchell: I did not say that.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: If it is going to do that it can only do it in one way.

Hon. J. Mitchell: I said it would affect securities.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: The hon. member said that the Bill was going to destroy securities, but let us take it that it will depreciate them. A security can only be depreciated if the valuation is low. Later on the hon. member stated that the Bill was going to have the effect of increasing taxation. It could only increase taxation by increasing values, therefore, according to the hon. member's criticism the Bill is going to have two diametrically opposite effects; it will reduce and increase the value of land.

Hon. J. Mitchell: There must be additional taxation to pay for the values.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: The hon. member was unreliable, because he stated that a person would not have an opportunity of appealing against his valuation for about ten years. The Premier interjected that an appeal would lie every twelve months. The member for Northam denied that and persisted in his statement. I want to point out for the benefit of the hon. member what the Bill really contains, and to show that the interjection of the Premier was correct. In regard to every piece of land which is valued, not only the owner, but every local governing body in whose district the land is situated, and any other person affected by the value, can lodge an appeal every twelve months. The Bill provides for district registers of land values being compiled; then provision is made that the register shall continue in force from the time of the signing thereof until it is abrogated, and then the system by which the register can be abrogated is set out. One of those ways is by a new register coming into operation. Then there is provision that the Valuer General shall, within one month after the commencement of any year, by notice in the *Government Gazette* declare that any register shall be subject to any modification included in the supplement referred to therein, or that the register shall continue without modification. Then provision is made for the publication of the supplement after it has been compiled, and in an earlier clause there is set out the method

of objection against the value in a district register, and this is repeated practically word for word with regard to the supplement. It says, "any owner, local authority, or any person affected by any valuation may object thereto." It is then further provided that objections may be made, notwithstanding that no supplement has been compiled. So we find, not only have they the right to object at the time the district register of land values is compiled, but also when the supplement one month after the beginning of each year is compiled they have the right to object whether their valuation has been altered or not. I think that clearly cuts the ground from beneath the feet of the hon. member who claimed that appeals could be lodged only once in ten years. I would ask the hon. member why he mentioned ten years; there is no reference to that period in the Bill.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Did I say ten years?

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: The hon. member might with equal justice have stated 50 or 100 years.

Mr. Green: And made a jubilee of it.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: He might just as well. The hon. member also claimed that he had carefully studied and compared the New Zealand Act with this measure and he strongly recommended the Premier to adopt the principles of the New Zealand Act. I would like to say that there is a provision in the New Zealand measure which, had it been adopted in our Bill, would have been responsible for the use of even a stronger word than confiscator, which was uttered by the member for Moore (Hon. H. B. Lefroy). It is provided in the New Zealand Act that if an owner of land is dissatisfied with the valuation placed upon the land by the Valuer General, and lodges an appeal and is still dissatisfied, and then takes the matter to the court and the court decides in his favour and against the Valuer General, the Valuer General then can notify him that he must agree to a higher valuation or he will resume the land at the price fixed if he thinks that the value fixed by the court is too low.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You are wrong.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: It is useless trying to argue with the hon. member across the Chamber. I say that the New Zealand Act provides that the Valuer General can resume at the value he fixed if he thinks that the value is too low, although the owner has appealed and has had the valuation fixed by the court. Of course the owner has a similar right. If the owner thinks that the value fixed by the court is too high, he can then notify the Valuer General that he desires him to reduce the valuation or resume the land at that value. Had that provision been in our measure, hon. members opposite would never have ceased to condemn us as confiscators. The Premier admitted, when introducing this measure, that it may be debatable whether a provision for resumption should be included in a measure such as this, and hon. members opposite in criticising the measure, did not criticise it from that point of view at all. They did not object or level their criticisms against the provision for resumption being included in this Bill. They levelled their criticism against the Government being able to resume at the value which the owner placed upon the land for taxation purposes. I desire to say, whether it is provided for in this Bill or not, that the time has arrived for the Government to make provision in some measure to see that they, as custodians of public funds, are no longer open to frauds which can be perpetrated upon them. It is well known to-day that under the present law, if information leaks out and anyone can acquire a knowledge of the intention of the Government to resume land in any place, a bogus sale can be arranged. Land may change hands at double its actual value and the Government will have to pay that price plus 10 per cent.

Hon. J. Mitchell: No.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: The hon. member is as contradictory as a mother-in-law. The law to-day is just as I have described it. Even though a bogus sale might not be arranged, if a man who goes in for speculating can get inside in-

formation he can purchase the land and it will pay him to make that purchase at the actual value, because he will get 10 per cent. added on the land being resumed. That would be splendid interest for perhaps a few months outlay. Whether the clause is allowed to remain in this Bill or not, provision will have to be made to protect the Government against this system which we know is in existence to-day. I am not going to detain the House further. I trust the measure will have a speedy passage. The criticism which has been levelled against it in this Chamber has been very weak and puerile and I trust that when the Bill goes forward, it will have a smooth passage and will be transformed into law.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE (Katanning): I do not think that any hon. member sitting on this side of the House objects to the principle of the measure which we have before us. What hon. members do object to is the fact that the measure embodies many debatable clauses, which I think the Government would have acted wisely by leaving out. The Government ought to have contended themselves by bringing in a more simple measure which would have been more in keeping with the requirements of this State. I am at one with the Premier when he says that the multiplicity of systems of valuation and the means of carrying out those valuations are irksome and expensive. At the same time the House wants to be careful that it does not overstep the limits of precaution and put upon the statute book a measure which will not only be costly, but which, in my opinion, will for many years to come be unworkable. We know to begin with that if the Bill is passed it will mean the creation of a very large department.

The Premier: No.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: I have a little knowledge of what I am talking about so far as country lands are concerned. To begin with, the Valuer General will find that he is faced with many difficulties and problems which do not exist in more settled countries, that is, in countries where the land has been taken up and more

highly developed than have been our lands. It cannot be argued for one moment that we stand on similar lines with the Dominion of New Zealand. Their lands are more highly developed than are ours; their areas are not so large, and I think that to select New Zealand as a country similar to ours is altogether wrong. The Premier has not been able to tell the House that any other State of the Commonwealth has adopted this system of uniform valuation.

The Premier: No legislation would pass if we waited for someone else to pass it.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: Still, we have to crawl before we can walk.

The Premier: It is time we knocked off crawling.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: It seems to me that if this measure is passed as printed the Government will be very glad to crawl out of it, because they will not be able to administer it with any degree of success. I hope hon. members will not approach this question in any party spirit. From the amount of levity with which this matter was treated in the early part of this sitting, it seems that hon. members opposite are disposed to treat it as a huge joke. Anything connected with the taxation of land seems to meet with the entire approval of hon. members opposite. Without going into the merits of the measure, although some hon. members on the opposite side are inclined to agree with us, yet I am quite sure that if we called for a division on the Bill, we would not obtain much support.

The Premier: You should not consider it from the point of view of taxation. It has nothing to do with taxation.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: I am not doing so; I am merely considering what effect it will have in the way of increased cost of valuation. If the valuation is carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Bill, the estimate forecasted by the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) will, in my opinion, prove to be much below the mark. I want to look at this question from a fair point of view. So far as carrying out these valuations is concerned, the Bill provides that every small

improvement made must be taken into account. Now, I would ask the Premier what staff will he require to take into consideration the improvements being made from time to time upon our conditional purchase lands throughout the State?

The Premier: (Do they not do it now?)

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: It is not done accurately. It is a moral impossibility for any department to complete that valuation within 10 years. Every farm, every block of land will have to be visited, and, as the Premier knows, it is not like valuing lands of all one quality. In a 100-acre block, to arrive at an accurate valuation it will be necessary to traverse every corner of the block and probably go over every bit of it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): How is it done now? The roads boards do it.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: There are very few roads boards valuing in accordance with the Bill.

The Premier: That is the trouble; it is making fish of one and flesh of another.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: I have had some little experience myself, having been chairman of a roads board for a number of years, and I know the difficulties in the way of arriving at a uniform system of valuation. I realise the difficulties only too well, but we are not going to get over those special difficulties presented in the Bill.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): There are no greater special difficulties in the Bill than are to be found in the Roads Act.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: If the Government can provide the staff to make an accurate valuation in accordance with the Bill of every block of land in the agricultural areas of the State, a very large department will be required to carry out those valuations within a reasonable period. It would have been a more practicable solution of the problem if the Government had brought in a simpler measure of land valuation legislation, providing for a sub-department of, say, the Taxation Department, which could gradually take into consideration the valuation of our lands, with a view of making the whole valuations of land uniform through-

out the State. It is quite impossible to carry out this work in a few months; in fact I do not think it will be carried out in a few years. Therefore, a beginning could be made through the Taxation Department by way of arriving at an acceptable arrangement with the local authorities, so that eventually we could secure a uniform system. Of course it would be necessary to get the co-operation of the local authorities. It seems to me that under the Bill the Valuer-General will not be availing himself of that local knowledge to the extent he might do.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): The local authorities do not fix values now.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: They appoint the officer, they hold the revision court, and the owner can appeal to the local court. After the valuer has done his work the roads board can revise it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): Only in the case of an appeal.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: No, I think the Minister is wrong. I think the roads board have power to revise the valuation.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): Only in the case of an appeal.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: That may be so in regard to the Municipalities Act, but I think I am right in regard to the Roads Act. If the Government would start by dealing with this matter in a simpler and more practicable way there would be a better chance of arriving at a uniform system. Besides the dual systems at present in use, namely, the valuations by the local authority and by the Taxation Department, we have also the Federal Taxation Department. I would have liked to hear from the Premier whether some arrangement could not be arrived at with the Federal authorities which would serve to abolish the double cost of administration and the dual system of taxation which obtains at present. It seems absurd that in this country we should have set up two huge departments, going over the same work and inspecting the same properties. After all, the people are the taxpayers, and have to pay the cost of administration.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): The Federal department will take this valuation, and will pay for it, too.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: We have no guarantee that they will. I would like to have some further proof than the mere statement that the Federal authorities are prepared to take the State valuation. It has been very ungenerously stated by some hon. members opposite that our opposition to certain parts of the Bill is based on purely personal motives. So far as I am concerned, I have not, nor do I know that any other members on this side of the House have ever said that they are opposed to a measure providing for a uniform system of valuation. We believe in it.

Mr. Dwyer: That is practically all that the Bill purports to do.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: We are willing at all times to support such a measure if it is a practicable one, but not a measure that takes in other debatable questions, such, for instance, as the valuation of land taken by way of resumption. In my opinion there is only one fair way of dealing with land taken for resumption. I am quite sure no one wishes to see a value placed on it over and above what it would actually sell at. At the same time there is always a sentiment attached to a piece of land upon which a man may have worked all his life, and to part with which may be a great hardship to him. Of course, as far as the member for Perth (Mr. Dwyer) is concerned, 10 per cent. would cover all his sentiment.

Mr. Dwyer: The owner of the land gets nothing at all for sentiment now.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: If the hon. member had his way he would not see any one take up country and develop it.

Mr. Dwyer: I am talking of what exists now.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: That is so far as the Public Works Act is concerned. But do not rope in another measure here which is going to lay down certain specific rules in regard to arriving at that valuation under the Public Works Act. I am going to vote against this part of the Bill because it is quite unnecessary. Why do the Government bring in the question of re-

sumption in a Bill of this kind? If they think an owner is undervaluing his property, let them do what is done in New Zealand. I think the member for Subiaco (Mr. B. J. Stubbs) could not have read those provisions in the New Zealand Act closely, because he seemed to be altogether at sea regarding them.

The Premier: He was quite correct. I will read them to you presently.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: Section 30 reads—

If the Valuer-General is of opinion that any land (other than a leasehold interest therein) has been fixed by the assessment court at less than its capital value, the following provisions shall apply:—(1), The Valuer General may, within 14 days after the hearing by the assessment court, give notice to the owner by registered letter that he requires the owner to consent to the capital value being fixed at a sum specified in the notice (being the sum which, in the opinion of the Valuer General, is the fair capital value of the land) and that, failing such consent being given within thirty days after such notice is received or is delivered at its address, the Valuer General will recommend the Governor to acquire the land on behalf of Her Majesty at that sum.

The Premier: What sum is that?

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: Fixed by the Valuer General.

The Premier: Notwithstanding the finding of the assessment court.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Yes, it may be higher.

The Premier: That is right.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: I will not read the whole of that section, but Section 31 says—

If the owner of any land other than the owner of a leasehold interest therein, is not satisfied with the value of such land as fixed by the assessment court, then the following provision shall apply:—(1) he may within fourteen days after the hearing by the assessment court give notice to the Valuer General that he requires the capital value to be reduced to the amount specified in the notice (being the sum which in the opinion of the owner is

the fair capital value), or the land to be acquired on behalf of His Majesty at the sum specified in the notice.

The Premier: Exactly what the member for Subiaco stated.

Hon. J. Mitchell: No, it was not.

The Premier: I am prepared to put that in this Bill.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: It would be fairer than this proposal, which will lead to no end of difficulties.

Mr. Heitmann: What is your scheme?

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: As hon. members on the Government side think this is the only Bill that can be introduced, I am not going to suggest a way in which the Government can make a better Bill.

Mr. Heitmann: What are you there for?

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: As far as I can see there is no reciprocity. Hon. members on the Government side want to take all and give nothing.

Mr. Heitmann: Can you name a Government measure that the Opposition have supported since we have been in power.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: I cannot remember many amendments moved by the Opposition that have been supported by the members on the Government side, although they have told us on occasions that they were in favour of them. We have been told that this measure was to follow on the lines of the New Zealand Act, and I have already tried to point out that it does not follow the New Zealand Act, but is an entirely new measure altogether. In fact, one of the most important provisions in the New Zealand Act is that local courts of assessment, are provided for, and by that means a man with a small holding and small means is able, without great expense, to get to his own local assessment court. But what does this Bill do? It specifically lays it down that in the first instance the Valuer General fixes the value, appeal is made to him and he decides the objection. Clause 29 goes on to say that the decision of the Valuer General, unless appealed against, is to be final. Further on provision is made for these appeals, and a court of review is fixed, but only for properties

of the unimproved value of £500 and under.

Mr. Dwyer: And over, too; see Clause 32.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: That is no doubt what the hon. member would agree with. In the New Zealand measure it is provided that a local court of assessment shall sit to hear these appeals and that court is constituted of a special magistrate appointed by the Government and one appointed by the local authority. There we have a court of appeal who will have some knowledge of local conditions, and with a country so sparsely populated as ours, and with the varying conditions and qualities of land in this State, the Valuer General will require to be the most marvellous man in the world if he is to understand the special values in all the different parts of the State.

Mr. Dwyer: The present court of appeal for roads board and municipal valuations is the local court of the district.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: And that is final. Would it not be more practicable to make it as simple as possible to settle these disputes? Under the New Zealand Act the Government have power to appoint two members on that board, and I take it that the persons appointed by the local authority would be interested to see that the values were kept up to a fair thing.

Mr. Heitmann: You would have no uniformity.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: There must be some way of overcoming that difficulty. The valuation department, with the assistance of the local authority, and with district valuers for certain localities, should be able to arrive at a uniform system of valuation. For instance, there might be a special valuator for each of the following districts—Great Southern, Northam and Eastern wheat belt, and the South-West. And these officers, who would be under the control of the valuer general, would assist the local authority in arriving at a uniform system of valuation. That, to my mind, would be the most practicable way, and the Premier would then be attaining his object of arriving at a practicable system of uni-

form valuation. In regard to the question of appeal, as I have already pointed out, in New Zealand appeal to the local authority is final, except upon points of law, upon which the appeal is to the Supreme Court. But in this Bill only estates of £500 or under can be dealt with by the Valuer General, and appeals in regard to estates over that value must go to the Supreme Court. I ask hon. members if they were over-taxed, even to the extent of twice the amount they thought they should be rightly called upon to pay, would they take a case before the Supreme Court?

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): The only thing I am afraid of under this Bill is that the taxation will be too low.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: The Honorary Minister need not have any fear of that.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister) I have every fear of it.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: Well that shows that at the present time the State is taxing on valuations that are too high, and if that it so they should be reduced. In many instances we are taxing on values which are prospective. What valuation do we find placed on conditional purchase lands which in many cases are sold at from 10s. to £1 per acre? Although probably only two or three years' rent has been paid, in very few instances will the Taxation Department accept the unimproved value at less than the price charged. That is not the unimproved value of the land. If that land was bought in accordance with the provisions of the Act and sold, the unimproved value could not possibly be the capital price which is being charged by the Crown. If only two shillings had been paid by way of rent the unimproved value could not possibly be 10s. or £1 per acre. It is manifestly unjust to tax on that valuation.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): What would be the value?

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: The value it would sell at, less the cost of improvements. That is the principle underlying all these valuations, both under the Municipalities and Roads Board Acts. If the

hon. member took up land at £1 per acre from the Government and held it for two years, would the hon. member say that land was worth £1 per acre unimproved?

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): I would not buy the land if it was not worth the money.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: The hon. member is wise not to buy land. But my point is that under the present system we are taxing on the prospective valuation, which we have no right to do. And if this measure becomes law that should be remedied, because we do not want to tax on any more than the true and proper unimproved value. Getting back to the court of review, it has been pointed out that for amounts over £500 anyone dissatisfied would be required to appeal to the Supreme Court, and I am sure hon. members on the Government side are not going to tolerate that and put up a barrier against appeal. Surely the smallest landholder in the State should have the right of appeal to a court which is accessible without difficulty, and without expensive litigation. If they have not that right I am sure we will start off with a court of review and go on to the Supreme Court, and finally the only court left to the landholders, particularly the small men, will be the Bankruptcy court. I have nothing more to say in regard to this measure except that I hope the Premier will be reasonable when we get into Committee. I want him to be sure of this point, that so far as I am concerned I am only too glad to support any reasonable measure which will have the desired effect of carrying out a system which we hope will become uniform, and will be of assistance, not only to the State Taxation Department, but also to all the local authorities. But the Premier will be wise if he withdraws the Bill entirely and brings in a measure which will be workable excepting the provision with regard to resumption. The Premier might do this without any loss of dignity because under this measure it will be impossible to go on to every holding and to inspect every location throughout the State and arrive at a general method of valuation. There is the matter of in-

creasing improvements to which I have referred. The value alters by the addition of improvements and it will take an army of valuers and officers to carry out the method in a practical and business like way. I hope that the Premier will be more reasonable. The object of arriving at a universal valuation is a good one, but the Premier is going the right way to have his object defeated and to prevent it from becoming law. Therefore, I hope that in Committee he will agree to any reasonable amendments.

On motion by Mr. Turvey debate adjourned.

BILL—FRIENDLY SOCIETIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 23rd September.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam): I have no intention of opposing this Bill, and I have risen only to do the Minister the courtesy of saying a word in favour of it. Provision is made that friendly societies lending money to a private individual or investing it in other than Government securities, or with local authorities may use all the interest above 4½ per cent., but if they lend to the Government or to local authorities they may use all the interest above 4 per cent. I suppose this is meant to encourage the societies who apparently have considerable funds—I see that £130,000 is invested—to invest this money with the Government, and I do not know that we can quarrel with the Government in that desire. The Minister has introduced the Bill at the request of friendly societies and I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Holman in the Chair; Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister) in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 12:

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN : The hon. member for Northam had evidently overlooked the fact that the Bill would enable friendly societies, if they so desired, to invest their funds in Government or local authority securities. At the present time they could not do so.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

BILL—FISHERIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (Honorary Minister) in moving the second reading said: Hon. members will find that this Bill consists of various amendments to the principal Act. It has been found that some of the provisions of the existing law are not sufficiently clear to enable the officers to enforce them.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Every one who goes fishing will have to carry a 2ft. ruler with him.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (Honorary Minister): Difficulties have been experienced in administering the Act, and under this Bill several sections are repealed and re-drafted to enable the officers in future to administer the law more efficiently than has been possible in the past. Provision is made dealing with the closing of specified waters and also with the closing of some waters absolutely. At the present time great difficulty is experienced in this connection. The measure enables the officials of the department to provide regulations for the taking of certain kinds of fish in specified waters. For instance, crayfish are fairly abundant at the present time around Rottnest, which is a tourist resort, and no person resident on the island is permitted as the law stands at present to catch these crayfish. It has been felt by the officers of the department that there would be no danger in regard to reducing the quantity of crayfish if persons were allowed to take crayfish from the waters surrounding that island for their use on the island.

As the Act stands at present either the waters must be closed absolutely or they are opened to anyone who wants to go there fishing for crayfish for sale or otherwise. The proposed amendment would enable the officers to make regulations giving those on the island an opportunity to take these fish for their use on the island. The principal clause of the Bill, however, is that making an alteration in regard to fish caught that are under a certain size. At the present time the question whether fish are under a certain size is determined by weight, but in this measure the length of the fish is substituted instead of weight. It has been found in other parts, particularly in New South Wales, that a better opinion can be given in regard to the fish if length is taken into consideration in preference to weight, as fish decrease considerably in weight after they have been caught, and consequently there is sometimes a possibility of action being taken in regard to a small fish that has been caught when such action would not be taken if length were substituted to be taken into consideration instead of weight. That is the principal feature of the Bill. Such a rule is already law in New South Wales and is also under consideration by the authorities in Victoria. The other matters provided for are merely amendments to make the administration of the Act more clear than it has been in the past. I beg to move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. J. Mitchell: What are you going to do with fish that get on the line?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

On motion by Hon. J. Mitchell, debate adjourned.

BILL—CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT.

Order Postponed.

Order of the Day read for the resumption, from the 23rd September, of the adjourned debate on the second reading.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Is there a quorum?

Hon. FRANK WILSON (Sussex): I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Hon. J. Mitchell: I second the motion.

The Premier: There has not been a debate.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The Bill was presented only last Thursday and there has been no chance to go through it. It is a lengthy measure and one that provides for numerous amendments. That is why I want the debate adjourned.

Mr. SPEAKER: There has not been a debate.

The Premier: It is a fortnight since the Bill was presented.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: It is nothing of the sort. It was last Thursday, was it not?

Hon. J. Mitchell: No, I think it was before that.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I have not been able to go through it yet. I hope the Premier will see fit to withdraw it to-night and adjourn the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: I will wait for the convenience of hon. members.

The Premier: The second reading of the Bill was moved a fortnight ago to-day.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I hope, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier will adjourn the debate. This Bill is a matter largely for lawyers, and although I have looked into it to some extent, I am not now prepared to go on with the second reading. A measure of this character is one which ought to be carefully considered, and we have had—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Is the hon. member speaking to the Bill?

Mr. George: The hon. member is giving reasons for an adjournment, I think.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Reasons for an adjournment cannot be debated.

The Premier: The hon. member could have gone on with the last Bill.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: We would have to get the assistance of some lawyer outside of Parliament in dealing with a mea-

sure such as this one. It is not a matter which a layman can deal with. It is desirable that legislation should be as perfect as possible, but it cannot be made perfect unless we here are given time to consult legal men in order to be better able to grasp the purport of a measure like this.

Mr. SPEAKER: Is the hon. member speaking to the second reading of the Bill?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: If you rule, Mr. Speaker, that I cannot speak again, I will be perfectly willing. I merely want to urge upon the Premier that we should be given an opportunity to consult authorities in order to deal with this Bill intelligently.

Mr. Male: Let them bump it through if they like; we will tell the country.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan): If I may be permitted to do so, I would like to make a statement and to intimate that I propose to move that this Order of the Day be postponed. I would like to explain that the second reading of this Bill was submitted to the Chamber a fortnight ago to-day, and outside of one measure, the Mines Regulation Bill, there has been really no Bill of any great importance before this House which would occupy the whole of hon. members' time. We just now adjourned the consideration of a measure in which, no doubt when it is again presented, we will merely be told there is nothing of importance, so that if the debate had gone on to-night, we might easily have passed it through the Committee stage. We must transact the business that is on the Notice Paper and hon. members have had a fair opportunity to consider this Bill. Hon. members have more opportunity of going through these measures than Ministers have in preparing to bring them before the Chamber. Hon. members should not be unreasonable in asking for the postponement of Orders of the Day in this way. In regard to this one, I move—

That the Order of the Day be postponed.

Motion passed.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Seaddan) moved—

That the House at its rising adjourn until Thursday, 9th October, at 4.30 p.m.

Question passed.

House adjourned at 10.50 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 9th October, 1913.

	Page
Petition: University Lands Bill	1592
Paper presented	1592
Motion: Electoral Rolls, Legislative Council ..	1592
Bills: Fremantle Improvement, 2R.	1596
Friendly Societies Act Amendment, returned	1600
Supply (No. 2), £1,025,000, all stages ..	1600

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

PETITION—UNIVERSITY LANDS BILL.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL presented a petition signed by the Warden of the Convocation of the University of Western Australia praying the House to refuse its sanction to the transfer of the endowment lands at West Subiaco to the Government in exchange for lands at Crawley.

Petition received, read and ordered to be taken into consideration on the second reading of the University Lands Bill.

PAPER PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: Order in Council authorising the manufacture, importation and sale of the explosive "Sabulite."

MOTION—ELECTORAL ROLLS, LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Debate resumed from the 2nd October on the amended motion of the Hon. H. P. Colebatch:—"That in the opinion of this House it is desirable that instructions be given to the Chief Electoral Officer that in compiling new rolls for the Legislative Council provinces the names of all persons who are shown by the municipal or roads board lists to possess the necessary qualification, be placed on the new rolls."

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY (East): In rising to support the motion moved by Mr. Colebatch in connection with the Legislative Council rolls, I desire to refer to a matter which has arisen almost annually, and on several occasions just prior to an election being held. We have once or twice been thrust into the somewhat dangerous position of the rolls being swept aside and new rolls, almost at a moment's notice, substituted. It seems almost necessary for the House to keep a watchful eye on the methods adopted by the Electoral Department. I, in common with many others, received a circular and was surprised on reading it to find that many of us were about to be faced with the position of having our names taken off the roll. One hardly realises that that could happen after the statement which was made to the House by the Minister, and it is difficult to understand that the Chief Electoral Officer should send out such a circular without intending to carry out what was stated in it. There is no doubt whatever as to what the circular claimed, and it certainly was the means of making a number of those who seriously considered it, sign claim cards and return them to the department. When I was returning my card I made a special point of asking the Chief Electoral Officer to send me a receipt for the claim I was sending in, because it was the third claim card that I had filled in for the same purpose within four years.

Hon. W. Patrick: For the same property?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Exactly the same property. I have for a considerable time been a taxpayer to the local roads board and the State Taxation De-