

Legislative Council,*Thursday, 29th September, 1927.*

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

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from Governor received and read notifying assent to Supply Bill (No. 2) £831,000.

RETURN—TAXATION.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [4.33]: Yesterday, Mr. Harris asked a number of questions dealing with taxation, and I replied that the information was not available at that time. Afterwards he pointed out to me that the matter was one of urgency, and that he required this information in order to discuss the Land Tax and Income Tax Bill. This morning I got into touch with the Taxation Department and asked them to endeavour to prepare the return asked for. I am pleased to say that they put on special officers to do the work, and that the return has now been prepared. I move—

That the return do lie upon the Table of the House.

Question put and passed.

QUESTION — RAILWAY WORKERS AND LONG SERVICE LEAVE.

Hon. H. SEDDON asked the Chief Secretary: 1, When is it anticipated that the industrial agreements between the Railway Workers' Union and the Commissioner of Railways, which embody long service leave, will be registered in the Court of Arbitration? 2, As the Industrial Arbitration Act, 1912-1925, provides that the term of an agreement shall not exceed three years from the date of making thereof, and may only continue in force at the will of either party,

what guarantees have these workers that long service leave shall be assured to them.

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, Next week. 2, The word of the Government which has initiated this principle.

QUESTION—AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE, CROPS.

Hon. W. T. GLASHEEN asked the Chief Secretary: 1, Are the Government aware that the wheat crop adjacent to the Great Southern Railway, belonging to the Muresk Agricultural College, is almost a total failure, apparently due to bad farming? 2, Are they aware that fallowed land for next year's crop on the farm is at present in a very dirty, weedy condition? 3, What is the reason for this apparent neglect on the part of those in charge?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, The crop referred to was not sown for grain. The wheat crop in this paddock last year was affected with "Take-all." To eradicate this it was cultivated to destroy self-sown wheat, and a crop of oats sown for early feeding. The crop has been heavily fed-off during the year. 2, The bulk of the fallow on the farm is clean. In the paddock adjacent to the line, cultivation is still proceeding. Operations in this paddock have been delayed by reason of the low-lying nature of part of the paddock, and by the fact that access to this part of the farm was not possible while the river was up. 3, Answered by Nos. 1 and 2.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT.*Second Reading.*

HON. A. LOVEKIN (Metropolitan) [4.37] in moving the second reading said: This is a very short Bill, of practically one clause. It is brought in to meet the exigencies of the situation with regard to King's Park. I proposed it in this Chamber with the full concurrence of the Government. I will preface my remarks by saying that the King's Park Board very much appreciate the action of the Government in endeavouring to help us in the manner proposed by this Bill. The measure provides for an amendment to Section 13 of the Traffic Act, by adding at the end of that section these words, "and the roads within the boundaries of Reserve A1720." That reserve is King's

Park. Section 13 of the Traffic Act provides for the distribution of the fees collected from licenses. Out of these fees the Minister first pays the cost and charges of collection. When these charges are met the balance of the money is divided into two equal parts. The first part goes to the municipalities and road boards, and the second moiety is left in the hands of the Minister for distribution in the case of roads that are within municipalities in some cases, but the land adjacent to which contributes no rates. The Minister has charge of these roads, such as the Causeway and portions of the Perth-Fremantle-road. The section sets out the particular roads upon which the Minister may apply his moiety of the fees. These are—

The roadway or decking (exclusive of the tramway) of the Perth Causeway; the roadway or decking (exclusive of the tramway) of the North Fremantle bridge; that portion of Railway-road abutting on the Karrakatta cemetery; that portion of road (known as Guildford road), starting at the present north-east boundary of the city of Perth and proceeding thence along roads Nos. 1448 and 2 to Johnson-street, along Johnson-street to James-street, along James-street to East-street, along East-street to the York-road (No. 28), and along York-road (No. 28) to the present eastern boundary of the metropolitan area; that portion of the Perth-Albany-road (No. 122) from the present boundary of the city of Perth to the junction with the Bunbury-road at the Old Narrogin Inn; and that portion of road (known as Canning-road, No. 124, and Lower Canning-road, Nos. 760 and 9) from the present boundary of the city of Perth to the eastern boundary of the municipality of East Fremantle.

With the consent of the Government, we propose to add to the section the words "and the roads within the boundaries of Reserve A1720," which is King's Park. When the roads in the park were first laid down they were lightly constructed. The main road is composed of 7in. of gravel only and the May Drive of 10in. gravel. These were very useful roads when only horse traffic prevailed. Of recent years horses have almost disappeared and motors have taken their place. Roads which would stand up to horse and light vehicular traffic do not stand up to motor traffic. Consequently, in the last few years we have had to close the park roads altogether. This is not a good thing for the State, because visitors who pass through naturally want to see some of the best part of Western Australia. We have been forced to close the roads because on many occasions the gravel has become so

churned up by the motor traffic that the wind has blown it away, and we have got down to the virgin sand again. We have opened the roads from time to time, but this has been due to members of the board themselves supplying gravel and putting it upon the roads. The Crawley Hill road, for instance, had £400 worth of gravel laid upon it in one year; but before many months had passed it had been churned up again, blown away, and the road had to be closed once more. The board desire to keep the park open. We have found that whilst the wages payable to the men have increased from about £2 15s. a week to 85s., the grant has been reduced. It was first reduced by £1,000 but subsequently put up again by £400, but it is still £600 less than we originally had when horse traffic on the roads prevailed. The wages themselves have nearly doubled. The King's Park Road is, therefore, not in a position to maintain the roads for the use to which they are now expected to be put. In their desire to keep this beautiful park open, the board approached the Government and asked their sanction for a by-law, which would permit us to charge a licensing fee of 10s. per annum for private cars and £1 for cars plying for hire. As hon. members know, there has been quite an outcry against the imposition of the fee although, for the life of me, I cannot agree that there is any justification for it. After all, it is the motorists who use the roads through the park for pleasure and it is the people who make use of thoroughfares for that purpose who should pay for the damage they do and for the wear and tear of the roads, just as tennis players, cricketers or bowlers pay for their recreation or enjoyment. Still, there has been the outcry that I referred to, and it is said that the by-law is odious. We have to recognise that, and we must face the facts. The board has been subject to a boycott by the Automobile Club, which caters for motorists. Instead of receiving about £1,400 a year from license fees, we have received something like £200. That amount will enable us to do practically nothing towards making the roads suitable for motor traffic and the subsequent maintenance of the thoroughfares. We have had various suggestions made as to how we might obviate the toll by providing some other means of raising the funds. In my view, however, and I think the members of the board are unanimously with me, most of the suggestions have been ridiculous and stupid. However,

we came to a dead-end. The board does not receive a vote substantial enough to cover maintenance and upkeep, and we have not received sufficient from the license fees to make good the roads. The intention of the board was to utilise the money received from license fees by capitalising the amount and borrowing money, applying the license fees to the payment of interest and sinking fund. By raising a loan in that way we would have been able to reconstruct the roads straight away and make them fit for traffic. We would have saved the expense of providing gravel and watering, which is a large item in summer months where gravel roads have to be kept in order. As I have already indicated, the suggestions made to the board were more or less stupid. One suggestion was that instead of levying a license fee of 10s. a year, we should levy a fee of so much per head on passengers who proceeded through the park. That proposal was not practical because on some days the traffic through the park is very heavy while during other days it is negligible. There are three gates giving access to the park and it would cost the board the wages of six men to collect the toll. The wages for those men would amount to about £1,300 a year. As the board expected to receive £1,400 from the license fees, hon. members will realise that the proposition was not a reasonable one. Another suggestion was made by a lady. She informed me that by imposing this iniquitous toll we were depriving her sick daughter, who had a great love for flowers, from going through the park. I offered to supply the lady with a license without any charge, but she said she would not accept it as that would be charity. I pointed out to her that in such circumstances it was she, not the park board, who was depriving her child of the pleasure she derived from visits to the park. She suggested that we should find some other means of raising the money. I told her that the board had been considering that matter for two or three years and had not been able to solve the problem. I suggested that perhaps she could tell us how the difficulty could be overcome. In reply she stated that we could arrange a few bridge parties and raise funds for the roads in that way! I told her that we wanted about £12,000 to put the roads in order, and suggested it would take a long time to raise that amount by means of bridge parties. She said she would go away and think the matter over!

Hon. J. Nicholson: But it would only take 12,000 parties at £1 each!

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: Another gentleman desired to extend a little hospitality to a professor who was passing through Perth, and expressed a wish to take him through the park. He stood at the gate and told the gatekeeper that as so much of the year had elapsed, he would pay only a proportionate part of the license fee. The gatekeeper told him that he was very sorry but the license fee was 10s. a year and he could not accept anything else. The man came to me and said that he offered to pay the gatekeeper 7s. 6d., but the man would not take it. When he said that, I replied jocularly by offering him half a crown and told him to get the license. He refused to take the money and said he would get a license so long as he did not have to apply to the same gatekeeper and so place himself, as he said, in an ignominious position. I tried to help him out of the difficulty, and I gave him a note to the superintendent asking him to supply the man with a license and told the individual concerned that he could pay the 10s. to me. The man went away with the note and, incidentally, I am still waiting for the 10s. That individual went through the park and used the note I gave him as his authority to pass through the park as if he had a peremptory right to go through without any license at all. That is the sort of thing the board has had to face. Then there is the attitude of the Automobile Club. That organisation suggested all sorts of things, so long as its members did not have to pay anything themselves. They suggested that the Government should apply the twopenny tax they had received on petrol to the funds of the park. As I pointed out in a letter to the president of the club, I would have condemned the Government from my seat in this Chamber if they had made available to the board any part of the £70,000 available from that source. As the Government receive a Federal subsidy of pound for every pound of that amount, it simply means that the £70,000 is really worth £140,000 if the money is applied to the purposes for which the subsidy is available. If any portion of the £70,000 had been made available to the park board, the subsidy would have been lost on that amount. The Premier and the Minister for Works are not so stupid as to agree to any proposal to apply money in that way, in view of the fact that every pound raised really repre-

sents £2 for expenditure on our roads. Such are the suggestions we have received. We have come to the position when we must either have an increased grant—I am loth to ask the Government for that in the circumstances—or we must get license fees. The roads must be maintained and the park kept open in the interests of the whole State. The Government have been very generous and wisely, I think, have come forward with the suggestion that they would not mind putting the roads of the park in the same category as other roads by allowing them to share in the traffic fees. That is all that the Bill provides. I trust hon. members will not stone-wall the Bill because the traffic fees were collected in July of this year and the board hope to participate in the distribution of those fees which must take place next month. If the Bill be passed by the House I am assured that there will be no difficulty in passing it through another place. If that is done expeditiously, we will be able to participate in the distribution of traffic fees this year. If that is possible we shall be able to do something with the roads. Summer is the best time for putting down bitumen coats on roads and we hope to be able to do that and keep the park open throughout the year. If the amount is sufficient, we will be able to abolish the obnoxious toll which no member of the board desires to impose. We had to impose it because of necessity. I commend the Bill to the House and move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. SIR WILLIAM LATHLAIN (Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.55]: I support the remarks of Mr. Lovekin, because the position of the King's Park Board has been a precarious one for many years past. Everything Mr. Lovekin has stated is correct. When we realise that there are seven miles of road throughout the park that have to be maintained, it will be realised that the board has very little left for the upkeep of the grounds. Hon. members should bear in mind, as Mr. Lovekin pointed out, that our previous grant was £3,000. It was cut down by £1,000 but was subsequently increased by £400, so that the total grant is now £2,400. In addition to the roads, there is a tremendous amount of work to be done in the park. It is unfortunately a fact that many of the pavilions are in a shocking condition, owing to the ravages of white ants. Further, the

hearts of many of the old trees, owing to the fires that have occurred in the park, have been burnt out, and it is impossible for us with the funds at our disposal to keep the park in the condition we would like. During the period I acted as Mayor of Perth, I endeavoured on several occasions to have the King's Park Board included in the distribution of the traffic fees. I was not able to achieve that objective, and I am sure that if we are successful in having this legislation passed, the position of the park will be much better. Members of the board give their services in looking after the interests of the park and the chairman, Mr. Lovekin, has spent an enormous amount of his private funds so that the people's pleasure may be provided for. The fact remains that it takes the whole of our present income to maintain the present roads in something like order. That is quite apart from other necessary work that has to be done in the park but which cannot be attended to properly. I trust members will give the Bill their whole hearted support.

HON. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [4.58]: I support the remarks of Mr. Lovekin and Sir William Lathlain. I hope that the Bill will be received with approbation by every hon. member. Mr. Lovekin, when introducing the Bill, detailed the circumstances that led up to the present position.

Hon. J. R. Brown: He ran wild.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I do not know what the hon. member means, but I am sure that if he had the knowledge that I have as a member of the board, of the great difficulties with which we are faced from time to time in maintaining the roads and grounds of the park, he would say that the Bill is long overdue. He would support this assistance being given to the board.

Hon. J. R. Brown: So you say!

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I am afraid the hon. member is under a misapprehension.

Hon. J. R. Brown: I am not.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I regret that the hon. member is under a misapprehension regarding the matter. The people of Western Australia should be congratulated upon having a reserve comprising one of the most beautiful spots in the whole of the State. One of the richest assets that any people could have is to be found in the park, and those who preceded us and in their wisdom set aside that park, should have their memory perpetuated for all time. The chairman

of the board, Mr. Lovekin, has given his individual support, financial and otherwise, in advancing the interests of the park.

Hon. A. Lovekin: That is not in the Bill.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: No, but I think the public should know the facts and the chairman should be thanked by the public for all that he has done. I know of a few of the many things that he has done for the park. He has done these things quietly and unostentatiously. Indeed, the park would not be what it is but for the help Mr. Lovekin has so readily given. There has been an effort to make it clear to all who are opposed to the small toll that is being levied by the board, that it was imposed as a last resort, because the board were absolutely without funds with which to maintain the park. Now, because of the opposition which unfortunately has been brought about by the Automobile Club, it is necessary to seek the aid of Parliament, and I am sure that Parliament in its wisdom will follow in the wake of their predecessors who are responsible for the preservation of the park for the people for all time, and see to it that the asset will be beautified and enriched for the people who own it. There is only one way in which that can be done, and it is by the financial help it is sought to obtain through the medium of the Bill. What is asked for is not much, but it will materially help to preserve the asset that belongs to us. I trust the Bill will be afforded unanimous support.

HON. J. R. BROWN (North-East)

[5.3]: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and negatived.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—HOSPITALS.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

BILL—BILLS OF SALE ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Assembly and, on motion by Hon. J. Nicholson, read a first time.

BILL—CLOSER SETTLEMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. W. T. GLASHEEN (South-East) [5.10]: I intend to support the second reading of the Bill with certain qualifications that I will explain later on. At the outset I may say that I approach the Bill with mingled feelings. We are all glad to know that so many people are applying for land and we are at the same time sorry that there are so many people who need land but who are unable to get it. That fact in itself seems to me to be good argument for legislation of this description. I draw the attention of the House to the figures submitted by the Chief Secretary when he introduced the Bill. Those figures to some extent are misleading. I am not accusing the Chief Secretary of having presented incorrect figures; what I wish to convey is that though they are departmental figures, they are misleading for the reason that I will explain. The Chief Secretary told us that during the 12 months just concluded, the number of applications for land totalled 7,546 and that the number of blocks allotted was 487. A casual look at those figures would rather incline one to believe that for every 20 persons who applied for land during the last 12 months, only one person was suited, and 19 were left. That is not correct, because a block may have been thrown open at Southern Cross and for that block there may have been 50 applicants. One applicant would be successful and 49 would miss. In actual fact the 49 who were unsuccessful at Southern Cross may have put in applications for perhaps a dozen blocks elsewhere, and in that way we get figures that are duplicated all along the line. We are told that 7,546 actually applied for blocks and only 487 were suited, indicating that the difference between the number applied for and the number suited was the number of people still looking for land. In this way the figures become considerably inflated. The fact remains that even with the reduced calculations, there are still many people looking for land to justify legislation such as we are now discussing. I was very pleased, and every member I am sure was also pleased, to hear the Leader of the House when introducing the Bill declare that the need for such legislation had been

supported by great economists, men who had devoted their whole lives to the study of such a subject. The Minister particularly instanced John Stuart Mill, Adam Smith, Henry George and others. As regards the land question, if one goes back in history and gets below the superficial causes of wars and revolutions, one finds the real, though hidden, cause to be centred in the land question. In our whole social and commercial life there is no other question so difficult and so intricate. At various periods the best minds of the world have attempted to deal with the land question, just as we are now attempting to deal with it; but it must be admitted that up to the present most land reform movements have signally failed. I was indeed pleased to hear the Chief Secretary quote great authorities, and thus immediately raise the debate above the parish pump level; but what struck me was that after quoting John Stuart Mill and Adam Smith the hon. gentleman swung round to an entirely different form of authority, a local form of authority. The Chief Secretary said that in addition to the great authorities named, there was the authority of the "West Australian" and the "Daily News"—which means the leader writers of those papers. They, also, had given the Bill their blessing. While I accept John Stuart Mill and Adam Smith as authorities for this Bill, I cannot accept the leader writers as such. When one refers to the "Worker," which is the mouthpiece of the Labour Government, one finds that in practically no issue is either the "West Australian" or the "Daily News" given credit for writing anything wise. Let me express the hope that when the next lumpers' strike or the next revolution of hotel and restaurant employees come along, the Chief Secretary will be kind enough to accept the views of the "West Australian" and the "Daily News" on those topics. Closer settlement legislation is nothing new, especially in the Eastern States, where many attempts in that direction have been made. Because of the outcome of those attempts, one cannot feel too much inspiration or enthusiasm for the present measure. We all know that in the East big properties have time and again been cut up and put into the hands of small men, and just as regularly has the most successful of those small men bought out the least suc-

cessful, and in the revolutionary process of things the one most successful man has become the sole proprietor of the estate. An hon. member said last night that there were only two concrete instances of successful closer settlement in this State. Mr. Holmes indicated that one of these instances was to be found at Yandanooka, and I believe Mr. Burvill interjected that there was another successful illustration at Palinup. I challenge both those instances. If one goes to Yandanooka to-day, one finds the same evolutionary process setting in—the successful man buying out the unsuccessful, and the land beginning to revert to its original condition of ownership.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You have not quoted me correctly. I said the holdings were too small to be successful.

Hon. W. T. GLASHEEN: And the same thing is taking place at Palinup. While the experiment there seems successful for the moment, the land is reverting to its original state of ownership. Seeing that these have been the actual results of all our closer settlement schemes up to date we cannot fall over ourselves in enthusiasm for the Bill. If land is to be cut up into small allotments and to remain in that condition, our land legislation must be amended by the insertion of a provision that a man shall have other qualifications for land ownership than that of possessing sufficient money to buy it. He should be called upon to prove that he requires the land for the purpose of producing something from it. If he cannot give such proof, the inference is that he is a mere speculator. Until our land legislation contains some provision of that nature, we shall ever and ever return to the situation in which the most successful man buys out the least successful. While Mr. Holmes was speaking last night, I took a mental view of him across the Chamber, and he seemed to me about 7ft. high, and at least 2ft. across the chest, and two or three yards round the stomach. For those fine soldierly proportions I envied him. But when that soldierly bearing was accompanied by the hon. member's views regarding the almost religious rights of landowners, I could only think that if Mr. Holmes had lived about a thousand years ago, say in feudal times, he would have made a splendid specimen of the feudal baron; and this very especially in view of the fact that he was so dreadfully concerned about the rights of landholders. So far as I could gather,

Mr. Holmes had little sympathy for the moral right of the community to provide land for the landless. I disagree with many of his objections to the Bill; and I say right here that if the hon. member had been as frightened of all legislation now on the statute-book as he seems frightened of this Bill, he would to-day be carrying a swag.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I object to any breach of contract.

Hon. W. T. GLASHEEN: The majority begin to climb the financial ladder by borrowing money, and before a person can borrow money he must sign a mortgage deed—I cite this as an instance. If one peruses a mortgage deed one must come to the conclusion that a person so timid as Mr. Holmes apparently is, would never sign such a deed and therefore would never rise in life since under the strict letter of the law on the statute-book the mortgagor who is seven days' over time in paying his interest can be sold up by his mortgagee. However, no mortgagee or financial institution of any standing has ever dared to carry out what the strict letter of the law authorises. If such a case occurred, public opinion, which after all constitutes most of the law, would so rebel that the business of the mortgagee and the mortgage institution would crumble to pieces. May I instance another fact showing that there is nothing in the fears expressed by Mr. Holmes. All my life I have been buying agricultural machinery on the time payment system. Now, the conditions of contract between the buyer and the merchant are such that if I have bought a machine for £100 and have paid up every shilling owing on it with the exception of one sixpence, and if I am two minutes late in paying that sixpence, the merchant can seize the machine. He can do that under the strict letter of the law. But has any merchant ever dared to do such a thing? If he did, he would never sell another machine.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: But under the Bill the Government propose to take the land after all the conditions of purchase have been fulfilled.

Hon. W. T. GLASHEEN: Some members seem to have great fears of a despot coming on their land and taking it from them. The Government are behind the board, and they stand in the same position as the mortgagee. What would happen if the board did such things as have been suggested? Immediately hundreds of landowners, who

supported the Labour Government at the last election, and who presumably will support them at the next, would become alarmed and that would be the end of the present Administration. Because of the force of public opinion I fail to share the grave fears and anxieties expressed by Mr. Holmes yesterday. These matters are, after all, regulated by common sense. The question of the appointment of the board under the Bill, and of the special work the members of the board will have to perform, represents one of the most intricate and difficult problems that we have to decide. The central point is whether land is being put to the best productive or economic use. One of the many anomalies which may creep in by reason of such great powers being vested in the board relates to the area of land held by the individual farmer. For example, I frankly admit that as a farmer I hold more land than I can use at present, and indeed more land than I am likely to use; but the point is that I have some children and that I have acquired a little more land than I can immediately use because in two years' time my boys, if I have not sufficient land for them, will have to come to the city. The board will have very wide powers, and possibly through lack of common sense may not be able to arrive at a right estimate of whether land is put, or intended to be put, to the best use. The whole kernel of my objection to the Bill is based on that aspect. I shall support the second reading, but in the hope that during the Committee stage we shall consider the advisableness of creating yet another board, whose functions will commence when the first board have gone on to a man's farm and said to him, "You are not putting this land to the best use." The man replies, "I am doing so." He has no further say; the board have the last word. Then the special board should step into the breach as an independent tribunal to decide whether the first board are right or whether the farmer is right.

Hon. J. Nicholson: It would be an appeal board?

Hon. W. T. GLASHEEN: Yes. I suggest that the House, if of opinion that the Bill contains this great danger, should appoint a select committee to inquire into the matter along the lines I have indicated.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You suggest two boards, then?

Hon. W. T. GLASHEEN: Yes.

Hon. J. R. Brown: One board would be enough.

Hon. W. T. GLASHEEN: Mr. Holmes asked yesterday whether one concrete instance showing the necessity for the Bill could be adduced. For the moment I cannot indicate more than one. At Kendenup the old bondholders under the De Garis scheme by some process or other still hold the title deeds of the lands. Struggling settlers have approached the Agricultural Bank, the management of which have gone so far as to say, "Yes, we will finance you." But when the question of financing is put to any financier, he invariably says. "What about value? I will finance you on a special value, which will be according to my calculations, and on no other value." But the people holding the land say that it is of another value. That is one specific instance I can quote of land being held out of use, some of it not being put to any use whatever. No doubt other instances could be quoted. Now may I indicate another danger. Take, say, 10,000 acres in the York district. The board journey up to York and find this block of land most fertile, capable of producing wheat. They will say to the owner, "You will have to produce wheat." The owner refuses, and ultimately he is compelled to offer the land for sale. That 10,000 acres may be worth £60,000, and on that security the owner, on a mortgage, may have raised £30,000, and possibly invested it in the city in some form of enterprise. The very fact that, under the directions of the board, he has been relieved of that security may possibly have its reaction in the city. There may be scores of such instances and, if so, the chaos resulting in the city will be far more than is anticipated. So it will be seen that it behoves us to be careful, even to the extent of appointing a second board to adjudicate upon the findings of the board contemplated in the Bill. There is this aspect also: I could wish to think the Labour Party always as desirous of closer settlement and getting people on the land as apparently they are in this measure, but I am compelled to confess that, taking the party all over Australia, there is not much uniformity in their attitude. The A.L.P. have a general platform. Yet if one goes to Queensland to-day he finds that the Labour Government in that State foster the greatest land combine Australia has ever known. People in that State are not putting land to any use at all, while

others are clamouring for it. I refer to the sugar land in Queensland, for which people are ready to pay £100 an acre. These are some of the many pinpricks that creep into the question, and I only hope that wisdom will prevail in our consideration of the Bill. I think the desire behind this measure is a desire to produce more wheat, which will bring in its train more wages, more work, more railway freight, and commerce generally, in other words, revenue. It is a splendid ideal, and all should agree with it, provided it works out in practice. But I would draw the attention of the Government to a far worse form of land speculation than any that might prevail in the country districts. Land sharks in Perth are almost as plentiful as flies. They have their ears to the ground for every expenditure of public money. It is wonderful how successful they are in getting inside stable information about projected enterprises, such as the building or extension of tramways. As soon as the intentions of the Government are known, these land speculators rush out to the locality where the tramline is to go, buy the estate and then wait for the tramline to materialise. So the enhanced value that should accrue to the community is pocketed by the land sharks. A man and his wife desirous of building a little home for themselves and their kiddies have to pay toll to the land sharks. That is a worse form of land speculation than any existing in the country.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The Bill does not deal with that.

Hon. W. T. GLASHEEN: No, it does not. I hope that, as an outcome of the measure, something practical will evolve. It shows a desire on the part of the Labour Government to provide people with land. When the Leader of the House tells us of all the people clamouring for land, and of so many being unable to secure land, it appears to be an indication that such legislation is necessary. Given the appointment of a second board to adjudicate on the question of whether or not land is held for speculation, the Bill should appeal to all of us. I suggest that a Royal Commission be appointed to put up reasons why a second board should be formed. If that is agreed upon, there will be no more hearty advocate of the measure than I.

On motion by Hon. J. R. Brown, debate adjourned.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [5.40] in moving the second reading said: This Bill provides for the insertion of a new Part (IIIA) in the Electoral Act, 1907, for the purposes of joint rolls for use at Commonwealth or Assembly elections or referenda. The new part is almost wholly a machinery measure bringing our electoral registration procedure into line as far as practicable with that of the Commonwealth. Part III. of the principal Act will still hold good for Legislative Council rolls. Since 1908 the question of having joint rolls has been under consideration, but for various reasons was not finalised until this Government decided to agree to the proposals of the Commonwealth Government and enter into an arrangement for the preparation and maintenance of joint rolls. In doing so they are following the examples of Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania. This Bill is not in any sense a party measure and should, therefore, meet with the approval of all members. The new part will come into operation by proclamation. A copy of the present arrangement between the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments has been supplied to each member of the House. The advantages of such an arrangement with the Commonwealth are fairly apparent, but the convenience of the public is, of course, the principal one. At present, a person claiming enrolment must apply to two officers in two separate offices and sign two separate claim cards. Under this Bill, one application only to one officer only and the signing of one claim card only will ensure enrolment for both the Commonwealth Parliament and the Legislative Assembly. This will mean a great advance on our present system and will remove all possibility of misunderstanding on the part of electors in regard to their enrolment. Under the proposed arrangement, the Commonwealth electoral registration officers, for the purposes of State rolls, will be appointed State electoral registrars and be under the control of our own Chief Electoral Officer, thus conserving the independence of the State electoral system, while affording Assembly electors better facilities than at present. There is also the advantage of economy, and

it is anticipated that there will be an immediate annual saving of £500, increasing possibly to £800 or £1,000 as time goes on. This saving will be mainly due to doing away with duplication or registration machinery and of the printing of rolls and forms, etc. As regards efficiency, the united official resources of both State and Commonwealth will be available for tracing the movements of persons eligible for enrolment, etc. In the metropolitan area, covering our 12 most populous electorates, and in certain goldfields and country centres, the Commonwealth has a habitation index, under periodical review by the postmen, and also a system of review by country postmasters and local agents, while the State has, of course, the assistance of State and local government officers and of the police, or in all, over 2,000 State electoral agents. The joint rolls, therefore, should be accurate and up-to-date. The actual work of registration under the joint rolls arrangement will be carried out by five divisional returning officers and their clerks and 27 registrars, all of whose services, as well as those of the local Commonwealth administrative staff, will not cost the State anything, the Commonwealth defraying the whole of such expenses. The State will pay half the cost of the printing of all joint rolls and all books and forms used for joint purposes, and of the necessary material therefor. The Commonwealth will pay the State half the cost of police officers used for joint electoral purposes. Of course, in preparing the first joint rolls, the State and Commonwealth electoral staffs will co-operate to the fullest extent possible, ensuring that all existing Assembly electors shall have their franchise rights fully safeguarded. In the preparation of the first joint rolls the Commonwealth will, where practicable, make the boundaries of their subdivisions coterminous with those of our Assembly districts, but wherever necessary special subdivisions will be established until steps are taken to make all boundaries absolutely coterminous, which is, of course, essential to the smooth working of the joint rolls arrangement. The Assembly districts that it will be necessary to subdivide while the present boundaries exist are those of Avon, Canning, North-East Fremantle, Guildford, Irwin, Leederville, Moore, North Perth, Pingelly, South Fremantle, Subiaco, Swan, Toodyay, Williams-Narrogin and Yilgarn, 15 in all. Wherever a State electoral district

does not overlap a Commonwealth division, one roll will do for both Commonwealth and State, but where our State districts overlap the boundaries of a Commonwealth division, it will be necessary, as a temporary measure, to have a special subdivision in the State district and it may be necessary even to print a special roll for Leederville, Canning, Guildford, Moore, Yilgarn and other districts. If a redistribution of seats Bill is introduced into either the State or Federal Parliament, there is provision for cognisance to be taken of the existing boundaries, and it is agreed that provision shall be made to have the boundaries coterminous wherever possible. The Commonwealth have a redistribution of seats only after a census. The latest census was taken in 1921 and alterations to the Commonwealth boundaries were made as a result of that census. No further census will be taken until 1931, and therefore it is not expected that there will be any alteration of Commonwealth boundaries before 1932.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Then we may not expect a redistribution until 1932?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: On the other hand, I think I can safely say there will be an alteration of our boundaries before that year. In any redistribution of seats Bill cognisance has to be taken by the State of the existing Federal boundaries and we are to endeavour to make our boundaries coincide with those of the Commonwealth.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Would it not be wise to introduce a redistribution of seats Bill now?

Hon. J. J. Holmes: And clear the whole thing up.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That matter will receive consideration. We will not alter our boundaries just to suit the Federal boundaries. If we can conveniently alter them to make them coterminous we will do so, but not otherwise.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Why not make the one job of it now?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There is no necessity to alter our boundaries because of this provision where, for instance, we find that such an alteration would adversely affect one of our electoral quotas or community of interest. Part IIIA of the Bill is taken almost wholly from the Commonwealth, Victorian, and South Australian Acts, and is essential to the successful working of the proposed joint rolls, as the Commonwealth system of registration will then ap-

ply to both State and Commonwealth electors and must be uniform. The system does not materially differ from our own and is certainly not less liberal in its application. While all the clauses of the Bill are essential to the success of the joint rolls arrangement and are, generally speaking, self-explanatory, a few of the provisions represent a departure from existing procedure and therefore require a little explanation. Clauses 8 and 9 provide for the division of a district into subdivisions. That does not imply an alteration of boundaries of any State electorate, but merely substitutes the word "subdivision" for "subdistrict," and in other respects coincides practically with Section 19 of the principal Act. No alteration whatsoever of the boundaries of a State electorate is implied or contemplated under those two clauses. I wish particularly to emphasise that statement.

Hon. E. H. Harris: I think it will be a long time after the passing of the Bill before we get a redistribution.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Clause 10, Subclause 5, contains a proviso that will obviate the necessity for issuing more than one electoral roll for any Assembly district the boundaries of which may overlap those of a Commonwealth division. It will enable the Minister to have a special roll issued for such districts as Leederville, Yilgarn, Guildford, Moore, etc. Otherwise, on polling day in such a district as Yilgarn, there would be **at least three separate rolls** in each polling place, and that would cause delay and confusion in the minds of electors.

Hon. J. Nicholson: It would lead to a lot of confusion.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: But confusion will be obviated if we have a special roll. Clause 19, Subclause 4, deals with nomadic electors. While compulsory enrolment is desirable and necessary, we consider that it should not be applied too harshly. In order that persons of what is termed the nomadic class, particularly those engaged in the pastoral industry, shall not be deprived of their franchise rights, so long as they still reside in the Assembly district for which they are enrolled and retain the necessary qualifications, it is proposed that their names shall be retained on the roll even though they are moving about within such electorate. The occupations are set forth in the proviso and it is considered that the franchise rights of those electors should not be taken away simply because they do not

lodge a fresh claim at each stopping place. Clause 38 provides for amendments of the principal Act, the chief one calling for mention being the amendment of Section 17. At present a natural-born or naturalised British subject must have lived at least six months in the State and one month in the electoral district before he or she can claim enrolment as an elector of the Assembly. Under the Bill it will be sufficient if he or she has lived for six months in Australia and one month in the electoral district concerned. If a person came from the Eastern States and resided here for one month he would be qualified for the franchise.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Even if he came only for a holiday?

Hon. A. Burvill: Has that provision been adopted in the Eastern States?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It need hardly be pointed out that if a special period of residence in the State were made to apply to Western Australian electors, it is doubtful whether the Commonwealth registrars could give effect to it in the proper manner. As there will be one official entry only of the particulars of a joint claim, the amendment is essential to the success of the proposed joint rolls. If a number of persons came from the Eastern States they would be entitled to the franchise. The absence of such a provision in the Bill would lead to trouble and expense.

Hon. E. H. Harris: It would enable Mr. Lang's shock troops to come over, would it not?

Hon. J. J. Holmes: They are too busy in their own State.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: In regard to the proposed amendment of paragraph (b), Section 18, which refers to inmates of charitable institutions, our Act disqualifies for enrolment every person wholly dependent on relief from the State, or from any State-subsidised charitable institution, except as a patient under treatment for accident or disease in a hospital, while the Commonwealth has no such disqualification. Inmates of the Old Men's Home and the Old Women's Home, as old age pensioners or patients under treatment, can and do now claim State enrolment. They are not disqualified for the reason that they are not wholly dependent upon the State. Conditions in this connection have altered in a drastic way since the enactment of this section of our Act, the number of

wholly dependent persons being very small. The words, "subject to be sentenced" are to be omitted from paragraph (c) of Section 18 for the sake of uniformity with the Commonwealth Act. Our object is to try to bring our legislation as far as possible into conformity with the Commonwealth Act. That Act does not contain these words "subject to be sentenced," and in any event no vital principle is involved. I regret I have not been able very clearly to explain the provisions of this Bill, but I have done the best I could in the circumstances. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. F. H. Harris, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.3 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 29th September, 1927.

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

ASSENT TO SUPPLY BILL.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to Supply Bill (No. 2), £831,000.

QUESTION—ROYALTY ON SKINS.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON (for Mr. Thomson) asked the Premier: What amount of royalty was collected by the Fisheries Department on opossum skins, grey kangaroo skins, red kangaroo skins, brush and wallaby skins during the twelve months ended 30th June, 1927?