

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 2nd October, 1894.

Occupation of land under Homestead Leases—Leave of Absence to Mr. Hassell—Supplying Hansard and other Parliamentary publications to public institutions—Closure of Street in Busselton Bill: second reading; in committee—Roads Act Amendment Bill: second reading—Droving Bill: consideration of committee's report—Dentists Bill: in committee—Agricultural Bank Bill: in committee—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 2:30 p.m.

PRAYERS.

OCCUPATION OF LAND UNDER HOMESTEADS LEASES.

MR. THROSSELL: I rise to move, "That in the opinion of this House it is "desirable that more encouragement "should be given to the occupation of land "under the homestead lease provisions of "the Homesteads Act." The motion speaks for itself, and needs very little advocacy from me. I might, however, point out that twelve months have now elapsed since the Homesteads Act was passed, and I believe I am right in stating that not one single lease has yet been granted under it. I believe I am also right in stating that many applications for leases have been made, but, as I have said, not one has been granted, which seems to me to indicate that either the Government are a little bit ashamed of their own Act, or, at any rate, are very backward in putting it in motion. I believe a good few applications have been sent in from my own district, but none of these applications, so far as I am aware, have been granted. Only yesterday two settlers, to my knowledge, would have taken up land under this portion of the Act, and they requested me to make their wants known. It is very discouraging—and I cannot help saying a short-sighted policy—to keep people who are anxious to take up land, waiting in this way. The Act empowers the Governor, from time to time, to set apart any Crown lands in the South-Western division of the colony, or in the Eastern or Eucla divisions, if situated within 40 miles from a railway, as open to application for leases; and, if the Government would only be prompt in taking action under this clause, many

desirable settlers, on the outskirts of agricultural areas, and surrounded by scrub land and sand, would very gladly take up this land, if the terms were made easier for them, and no obstacles thrown in their way. With regard to these homestead leases, or grazing farms as I prefer to call them, they would be more likely to be attended with success if they were easily obtainable by men now on the land, engaged in farming proper, and the department showed a little more activity and a more eager desire to assist these people. I fully recognise that as regards homestead farms (as distinguished from homestead leases), the department have shown every desire to carry out the provisions of the Act in that respect; but as to homestead leases, as I have said, although several applications have been sent in, not one lease has yet been granted. That being the case, and the Act having now been in operation about a year, it seems to me that something is wanted. I think the Government should, to say the least of it, show a little more energy, and a little more confidence in their own Act. If they did, I think they would not regret it. I would not advocate leases being granted prior to survey; I think it would entail too much expense upon the Government, but if the system in vogue in Queensland were followed here, and applicants were allowed in the first instance to classify the land themselves, and to occupy it and go on with their improvements, pending such time as a surveyor could be sent out to report upon the application and to decide what class the land should be classified under,—I think if that system, which seems a feasible one, were adopted here, it would greatly facilitate the occupation of these lands as homestead leases. I merely throw out the suggestion; but I do hope the Government will take some immediate steps to enable intending occupants to avail themselves of the provisions of this Act.

MR. RICHARDSON: I have very much pleasure in supporting the resolution. Though very general in its terms, I hope it may have some effect, if only in drawing the attention of the Government to the utter absence of any effort, so far as I can make out, to enable intending settlers to take advantage of the homestead lease portion of the Act. I believe

some efforts have been made with regard to the homestead farm portion of the Act; but the main hope which I and others had in regard to the successful and beneficial operation of this Act was centred in that part of the Act relating to homestead leases rather than homestead farms. We expected that a good deal of settlement would ensue by putting into active force that section of the Act, and I am at a loss to understand—I will not say the apathy, for I suppose they are as anxious as we are to encourage settlement—but the inactivity of the Government in this matter. I suppose, however, the lion in the way is the survey before selection difficulty. I believe I am right in saying that several of us—I know I did, for one, and I think several other practical men in the House—pointed out that difficulty at the time the Act was passing through the House, and suggested it would be a difficulty that would face the Government as soon as they attempted to put the Act in force, and that it would go a great way to render the Act inoperative. I think the result has pretty well borne out our anticipations. It may be that their fear lies in this direction: that, if applicants were allowed to take up land before it is surveyed and classified, they might, when the classification came to be made afterwards, consider that the land was classed too high, and throw it up. But I think that difficulty might be avoided by requiring a fee to be paid upon application, and, if the land is not taken up on the ground I have referred to (that it is classed too high) the fee should be forfeited. Any *bonâ fide* settler who intends to make use of the land, and sends in his application first, means to get that land if he possibly can, in whatever class it may be put. I take it that these men will not be far astray in classifying their land, when they send in their applications, and that in most instances the classification would be confirmed. I think it is a matter for great regret that this Act has not been more actively administered, seeing that there is plenty of land available, and that there is no dearth of applicants. The Government are losing a lot of money and settlement is retarded. That land will lie there until Doomsday, unless some efforts are made to get it occupied. It

has been lying idle for the last sixty years, and it will lie idle for another sixty years, unless we make such regulations as will induce and enable people to take up this very indifferent land. A great deal of it is not fit for cultivation, and I do not think there is any prospect of getting any large area of it cultivated. Out of 5,000 acres there might be a few hundreds perhaps fit for a homestead, or which might be a sufficient inducement to people to form a homestead. But the land we have in view, speaking generally, is land that is only fit for grazing; and that is the only use it is ever likely to be put to, for the next hundred years at any rate. I believe the Act itself is one of the best Acts in Australia, and suitable to the conditions of the colony. The fault has been in the administration of the Act, or rather in allowing the Act to remain inoperative.

MR. PIESSE: I am not quite so sanguine as the hon. member for the De Grey in regard to the success of these homestead leases. I think he will find that the rate per acre for the class of land he speaks of is too high, if we are going to do anything in the way of settlement. A great deal of this land is poison land, and we know the value of that class of land, and the cost of getting rid of the poison. I think it would be hard to find a 5,000-acre block, in the South-Eastern division at any rate, without poison plant upon it. We know that very little land is now taken up under the poison regulations; and, if men do not care to avail themselves of the conditions of the present poison Land Regulations, I am very sure they will not avail themselves of the provisions of these homestead leases, unless it is those who reside upon the lands near the coast, where the poison plant does not grow so thickly as in districts that are more inland. If it comes to a matter of cultivation, there will be an enormous expense and enormous difficulties to be met. Then, as to the classification of these lands, who will classify them? If we send out surveyors for that purpose, these surveyors as a rule know very little about classifying land. They may be very good surveyors and skilful with the theodolite, but they have very little knowledge or experience to enable them to judge of the value of land for purposes of classification. We know that

from past experience in connection with agricultural areas. Much of the land selected and surveyed for that purpose is not suitable for selection. It would be the same with these homestead leases; the same mistakes would be made in classifying the land, and the selectors would not be satisfied. For every hundred sections surveyed we might have five taken up. The only way out of the difficulty is to permit free selection. We might then bring about some good results. I also think it is necessary to reduce the rates for second and third class land; unless you do, we shall have very little settlement under this Homesteads Act. If classification is necessary, let it be made afterwards, in the same way as is done with poison lands at present.

MR. CLARKSON : It is not quite clear to me what the hon. member for Northam means by his motion. If it means that the selector under this Homesteads Act is to be allowed to select land all over the country, I cannot agree with him. I think this right of selection should be confined to certain areas, except in the case of very inferior land; and that inferior land, I am afraid, this Act will never touch. I quite agree that something should be done in regard to opening up this inferior land, and throwing it open upon terms that will tempt people to take it up. I think it might be given away, if you cannot get rid of it any other way, so long as it is made a condition that it shall be utilised. But, as to throwing the whole country open for selection under this Homesteads Act, I cannot agree with the hon. member if that is his object. I think it would be giving too wide a range for selection altogether. I hardly think he contemplates that, though from the way he put his motion it would almost appear so.

MR. MORAN : I only wish to say I think the Government should define exactly under what class pastoral lands surrounding the Eastern goldfields are included. There are numerous applications concerning these lands, but people do not know exactly under what regulations to apply; and I am not quite sure whether the Government themselves have made up their minds on the subject of the classification of these lands. There are hundreds of thousands of acres which are not (and never will be) included as

gold-mining lands; and, as there are applications for them, I simply rose to ask the Commissioner of Crown Lands if he will give us an exact idea of the *locus standi* of these applications, and what steps the Government propose to take with regard to these lands.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) : This matter which has been brought forward by the hon. member for Northam has already been before the House this session, in an informal kind of way, and I do not know why it should have been brought forward again. Some members complain that the Government have not been as active as they would like them to be in regard to these homestead leases. I admit at once that no great progress has been made since the Act was passed last year; but members must recollect that, in order to classify this land, a considerable amount of work has to be undertaken, and a considerable amount of expense. Besides that, under the Land Regulations, as applied to the Eastern division of the colony, twelve months' notice has to be given to the pastoral lessee in occupation of the intention of the Government to resume the land, and it has to lie on the table of the House. In regard to the South-West division, six months' notice has to be given to the pastoral lessee before you can take away his land. That of course takes up time. At the same time, I am prepared to admit we have not done as much, perhaps, as some members expected us to have done; and the chief reason has been in regard to the expense and difficulty of examining and classifying this country. I think members who have spoken on this subject have altogether forgotten the principles which underlie the Land Regulations of this colony, when they advocate that free selection should be allowed all over the South-West division. What is to become of the security of tenure of the pastoral lessee, that we are always so anxious to provide for, if you are going to allow this free selection—not for agricultural purposes, mind, but for pastoral purposes—within the land the pastoral lessee has taken up? If you allow free selection over these areas you may as well throw the regulations to the wind. We have to examine the land first and classify it; and we have to give due notice to the lessee, if necessary. I am

of opinion that this matter is not so very pressing at present that we should hurry it on, at any large expense. We have already examined the country between here and Southern Cross, and very shortly that country at any rate will be thrown open, for what it is worth, to these leaseholders. In time, we hope also to be able to do something in other parts of the colony. As to the South-West part, I am not prepared to say that large areas of that land shall be alienated for the purpose of these homestead leases. Taking into consideration the railway in that part of the country, I think we should not be in too great a hurry to have the country taken up in too large areas for pastoral purposes. My hopes in regard to this Homesteads Act do not lie in the direction of those of the hon. member for the De Grey, who pins his faith to these homestead leases. Though I hope great good will come from these leases, still my faith lies more in the direction of the homestead farms. He and I are as far apart as the poles in this respect. I want the land that is available for agriculture used for agriculture, and land that is available for pastoral purposes used for pastoral purposes. Second and third class land will come in by-and-by under these homestead leases. As to the regulations in Queensland, we must remember that Queensland and Western Australia are very different, and their regulations are necessarily very different from ours. I believe, myself, that a great deal of annoyance and trouble and unnecessary expense would result if we adopted the Queensland system here of allowing applicants to classify their own lands, subject to subsequent classification after survey. The result in many cases would be that people who had applied for land would not take it up if it was not classified as they expected. If the hon. member is prepared to say that the applicant shall put down a sufficient sum to cover the cost of the examination of the land, there might be something in his argument. But, after all, he would be entirely destroying what we have tried so much to do, and that is to give security of tenure to the pastoral lessee in this part of the country. It is bad enough as it is now; it would be worse still if you allowed free selection before survey.

I hope we may be able to get along a little quicker in carrying out this Act in the future than we have in the past; but we must remember that these notices required under the regulations prevent us from proceeding very quickly. I do not really see what good the hon. member will do by pressing his motion.

MR. HARPER: What has fallen from the head of the Government shows what I have been afraid of all along,—that the Premier, or the Government, do not appreciate the present state of affairs in regard to the condition of agriculture and the settling of people on the land. The Premier says he pins his faith to homestead farms, and not homestead leases. He said, the other night, in introducing the Estimates, that in his opinion it would be all the better for the country if it were all under cultivation, and that there was nothing to be feared from over-production. If the Premier's ideas were carried out, it would simply reduce the agricultural industry into pauperism. When we recognise the fact that the standard value of wheat to-day, on the farm, is a little over 1s. a bushel, I should like to know what encouragement it offers for the farming industry, so far as cereal cultivation is concerned. It means this, that the man engaged in growing wheat alone would have to work at the rate of 2s. a day, which, at the prices now ruling for wheat, is about the standard value of his work; whereas the artisan or the mechanic in town is earning five or six times as much, and with limited hours. What attractions, then, does farming, pure and simple, offer in the present condition of affairs? I think the sooner the Government recognise that the immediate future of those who are on the land lies in the raising of stock far more than in the cultivation of cereals, the better will it be for the country. The one incessant lament of those now engaged in agriculture is, "What are we going to do in the future, when we cannot grow corn at any profit at all?" That is the burden of the farmer's cry wherever you meet him; and the Government would do well to realise the present position of farming. There is a very large area of land in this country suitable only for grazing, but at present there is no probability of that land being taken up except under these homestead

leases, whereby people can improve this land, and utilise it for stock raising. I think the sooner the Government endeavour to recognise this fact—that the future of agriculture in this colony lies more in the direction of grazing than in the direction of wheat growing—the better will it be for the colony.

Motion put, and a division called for, the numbers being—

Ayes	13
Noes	8

Majority for ... 5

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. A. Forrest	Mr. Burt
Mr. Harper	Mr. Clarkson
Mr. Illingworth	Sir John Forrest
Mr. James	Mr. Marnion
Mr. Keep	Mr. Pearce
Mr. Loton	Mr. R. F. Sholl
Mr. Moran	Mr. Venn
Mr. Paterson	Mr. Solomon (Teller).
Mr. Richardson	
Mr. Simpson	
Mr. Throssell	
Mr. Traylen	
Mr. Piesse (Teller).	

Question thus passed.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE TO MR. HASSELL.

On the motion of MR. A. FORREST, leave of absence for fourteen days was granted to the hon. member for Plan-tagenet (Mr. Hassell).

SUPPLY OF HANSARD, &c., TO PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS.

MR. SIMPSON, in accordance with notice, moved, "That, in the opinion of this House, it is desirable that copies of *Hansard*, the 'Votes and Proceedings,' the 'Blue Book,' and all maps descriptive of agricultural, goldfield, and mineral areas be furnished annually to all mechanics' institutes, miners' institutes, working men's halls, agricultural halls, and other kindred institutions throughout the colony." He said it was rather a large order, but he did not think it would cost the country very much. He thought it was likely to prove useful if these publications were circulated, as he proposed, for public information. He had heard it mentioned in several parts of the country that there was a difficulty in obtaining these official publications for reference, when required. He did not know that people in the country would be immensely interested or intellectually improved by a perusal of the records of *Hansard*, but he thought it might be

useful for reference, and that the other documents would furnish a lot of very useful information connected with the colony and its resources. In moving for the dissemination of these publications in this form, he did not wish in any way to reflect upon the activity and enterprise of the local press in furnishing the public with such information; but as these publications appeared in a less ephemeral form than that of a daily newspaper, he thought it would be useful if his suggestion were acted upon.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said he understood that some of these publications were already supplied to the public institutions of the colony, and he thought it would be very useful to have this information distributed throughout the colony, if it did not entail too great an expense. He was under the impression that *Hansard*, the "Votes and Proceedings," and the "Blue Book" were regularly supplied to these institutions. [MR. SIMPSON: No.] A resolution to that effect was carried in that House years ago. He thought it would be a very good idea to have these publications and maps furnished to these public institutions of the colony, if they could get some one to see that they were regularly supplied.

Motion put and passed.

CLOSURE OF STREET IN BUSSELTON BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The object of this small Bill is to close a small street in the town of Busselton that has never been used by the public, although it was laid out as a street when the town was surveyed. It runs through the present cemetery, and goes near, if it does not include, the grave of the late Colonel Molloy; and the people of the town wish to have the street closed. Everyone agrees it is not necessary, and we have been asked by the Municipal Council to close it.

MR. RICHARDSON: What will be done with the land?

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): We are giving it to the Church; as a matter of fact they have had it for years, as it forms part of the churchyard.

Motion put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

ROADS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): The object of this Bill is to supply several little omissions that have been found in the present Act relating to the election of Roads Boards, and to make some other amendments. In the first place, we propose to deal with the 97th section of the present Act, which section relates merely to the certificate of title of any land sold by a Board for arrears of rates. A similar clause will be found in the Municipalities Bill which left this House the other day. The clause in the present Roads Act only deals with land that has not already been brought under the Transfer of Land Act; it does not apply to land which is already under the Act. We propose to repeal that section, and to introduce a new clause applying to all rateable land. Then we propose to amend that portion of the present Act which deals with the electoral lists. In some of the Northern portions of the colony these Roads Boards have been elected from time to time in some manner which I cannot really give an account of. I do not know where they got their electoral list from—possibly they never had one, and they have got on very comfortably so far; but they are beginning to open their eyes now, and to inquire whether they really exist as a Board or not, and, if so, how? We propose now to put this question on a proper footing. The reason why these electoral lists have been virtually non-existent is owing to certain irregularities or omissions in the Act. Lessees of pastoral lands from the Crown could not be rated under the existing Act, and, of course, unless they could be rated they had no right to be on the electoral list, and, consequently, could not legally vote nor become members of a Roads Board; and, as a matter of fact, these Boards in some instances have been constituted illegally. Members are aware that in our Northern districts a large proportion of the population consists of pastoral lessees or their representatives. We propose to repeal the words "or leased from the Crown for pastoral purposes," from the interpretation clause in the present Act—lands of that class being now exempted from being rateable for the purposes of the Act; and the omission of these words will bring

these lands within the scope of the Act, and therefore entitle the owner or occupier, as the case may be, to have his name inserted on the electoral list, and make him eligible for election as a member of a Roads Board. The next section provides that the net annual value of these lands leased from the Crown for pastoral purposes shall be taken to be the annual rent payable to the Crown by the lessee. I think that is a fair valuation, and it will place the question on a simple footing and beyond dispute. Then, again, in these Northern parts of the colony it often happens that the owners of pastoral properties do not reside in the district; in some districts there are very few resident owners, and if you only give votes to those who reside on the spot your electoral lists in some of these districts will be very meagre indeed, and you would not get a sufficient number of electors to constitute a Roads Board, or to work it. We therefore provide that the manager or superintendent of these properties, in case the owner is not a resident of the district, shall be entitled to have his name on the electoral list. These managers, as a rule, are very intelligent and respectable men, and they will now be able to offer themselves as candidates for seats on the district Board. That is only in cases where the lessees themselves do not reside in the district. Another little matter provided for in the Bill is with regard to placing public reserves, or public works, wells, tanks, dams, or other works, under the control of these Roads Boards. There is no power at present giving the Boards control over these things, though the power has been exercised. The next section empowers the Government to provide that any portion of the grant made to a Board shall be devoted to some specific work or object. That also has been done in the past, though without legal sanction. The existing Act provides that three-fourths of the grant made out of public funds shall be expended on main roads and the remainder on minor roads; therefore the Boards at present cannot legally expend this money in sinking wells or making tanks or dams,—although as a matter of fact they have been largely doing so. Clause 8 empowers these Boards to do so, in order to provide a water supply along any line of road in

the district. The next section deals with the making of by-laws under the Act to carry out the objects which I have enumerated. That is about the whole of the Bill, and I think it will be found a useful little measure; in fact, it ought to have been in existence some years ago.

Motion put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

DROVING BILL.

On the Order of the Day for the consideration of the committee's report upon this Bill, the amendments made by the committee in Clause 5 were agreed to.

Clause 5 (as amended)—Travelling stock to be moved certain distances per diem:

MR. RICHARDSON said when this clause was considered in committee, the distance to be travelled by sheep and other small stock was reduced to five miles per day. He thought that when stock travelled through paddocks, or runs that were fenced, they ought to travel a little faster. He proposed to make it seven miles. He therefore moved that the words "or when through enclosed lands seven," be inserted after the word "five."

Amendment put and passed.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) moved that all the words in the proviso, at the end of the clause, be struck out, with the view of inserting the following proviso in lieu thereof: "Provided, however, that if it should be made to appear to the satisfaction of any Justice of the Peace, or Inspector, or the occupier of the run through or along which such stock are travelling, that owing to some unforeseen cause the compliance with the foregoing provisions would entail unnecessary hardship, it shall be competent for any of such persons to give a written permission varying the requirements of this section in such manner as they may deem expedient."

Amendment put and passed.

Clause 6—Drovers to give notice before entering a run:

MR. RICHARDSON said he had several verbal amendments on the notice paper which he had intended to move in this clause, but, instead of making all these verbal alterations, he proposed to reconstruct the whole clause as follows: "Every drover, before allowing any

"travelling stock to approach within "twenty-five miles of the head station or "homestead on any run, or the head- "quarters of any person in charge of stock "on any part of a run, shall give the "occupier of such run, or person in charge "as aforesaid, not less than twenty-four "hours' nor more than three days' notice "of his approach, by leaving such notice "at such head station, homestead, or head- "quarters, as the case may require, and "such notice shall specify by what route "such stock are about to be driven across "such run. Provided further, that such "notice shall not be necessary in case of "horses, camels, or cattle *bonâ fide* used "for saddle, packing, or draught, or where "the number of horses shall not exceed "twenty."

THE SPEAKER did not think that a clause could be inserted in the Bill at this stage, without recommitting the Bill, or, at any rate, without some notice.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) moved that the debate be adjourned until the next sitting of the House.

Agreed to, and the debate adjourned accordingly.

DENTISTS BILL.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clauses 1 to 13 inclusive:

Put and passed.

Clause 14—Offences:

MR. JAMES said one of the offences provided against was the making of any false declaration required under the Act; he thought this should only apply when a declaration was wilfully false. He therefore moved that the word "wilfully" be inserted before the word "makes," at the beginning of sub-clause (5).

Amendment put and passed.

Clauses 15 to 19 inclusive:

Put and passed.

Preamble and title:

Agreed to.

Bill reported.

AGRICULTURAL BANK BILL.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clauses 1 to 17 inclusive:

Put and passed.

Clause 18—Bank may make advances to farmers, &c.:

MR. HARPER said the clause provided that advances should be made—

(a.) For the purpose of making improvements on unimproved holdings, or (b.) adding to improvements already made on holdings. He moved that the following paragraph be added:—“(c.) Erecting and equipping co-operative establishments, as hereinafter defined.” The object of the amendment was to enable the Government to advance money for this purpose, which, in his opinion, would tend very much to increase the value of the Bill.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said he would have been very glad to meet the views of the hon. member, because he knew the hon. member's object was exactly the same as his own, namely, to encourage in every way they could the productions of the country. But this Bill, although it had a good many clauses in it, was really confined to a very definite purpose, as set forth in paragraphs (a.) and (b.) The hon. member was introducing a new principle, and a principle which (though it might be very useful) was outside the scope of the present Bill. He was willing to admit, and he had so admitted all along, that this Bill had no counterpart that he was aware of anywhere. [MR. SIMPSON: Hear, hear.]

They had Acts in force in other countries for lending money to agriculturists and others—he had seen the New Zealand, the Queensland, and the Victorian Acts—but they all dealt with the question of assisting persons who required to borrow money on their estates; they did not deal with what this Bill dealt with, namely the improvement of unimproved holdings, or the making of further improvements. They all dealt with lending money on the security of their estates. This Bill was intended to assist people who wished to make further improvements, and not those who had already got into debt. The hon. member's proposal was that we should lend money for the purpose of “erecting and equipping co-operative establishments, as hereinafter defined.” He did not know what the hon. member proposed these co-operative establishments should do—that remained to be “hereinafter defined,” but he presumed it was intended to assist persons to establish creameries probably, or wineries, perhaps, or some other industry of that kind. But he preferred not to deal with such matters in this Bill at present, at any rate. The

object of the Bill was to increase the cultivation of the soil, to clear it and to cultivate it; and he did not think that the establishment of co-operative creameries or wineries would do that. To assist such establishments as these would be to assist people who had already cultivated their land and done what this Bill was intended to assist others in doing. He thought the hon. member's proposal might wait for the present, and let us see how we got on with this Bill, which was a very simple one, and restricted in its operation.

MR. HARPER thought they might accept the assurance of the Premier as to his desire to assist those who wished to develop the resources of the country. But he thought that most members connected with land knew that the great difficulty now was, not so much in encouraging production as to know what to do with your produce afterwards; and it was in order to meet this difficulty in the most feasible way, namely, on the principle of co-operation, that he moved this amendment. He felt confident that this Bill would never prove the useful measure it might otherwise prove unless they extended its scope in the direction he had indicated. Producers at present were suffering very much from outside competition, owing to the want of facilities for disposing of their produce; and, until they were afforded these facilities, it was hopeless for them to attempt to compete with producers in other countries where those facilities obtained, and where this co-operative principle was carried out. For these reasons he hoped the Government and the House would accept the amendment.

MR. LOTON said he had not had an opportunity, as yet, of saying a word in connection with this Bill, having been unavoidably absent on the second reading; nor did he intend to occupy the time of the committee at this stage for more than a moment or two. The clause now before them confined the operation of the Bill to assisting people, by advances of money, to make further improvements on their land. That was the exclusive object of the Bill. With regard to the amendment, he might say at once it did not meet with his concurrence; and, briefly, he might say he was not in accord with this Bill at all. He was satisfied from

careful consideration that in adopting this step the Government were adopting a step they ought never to have taken. The Bill, if it passed, would in his opinion be a measure that should never have appeared on the statute book of the colony. He was satisfied it would land the Government in difficulties, and also in losses to a certain extent. They were told in this clause what the manager of this Agricultural Bank was expected to do; and he thought it must be pretty clear to members that this manager must be a pretty smart all-round expert. The margin that was allowed to cover the expenses of management and the superintendence of the improvements would run away with a considerably larger amount than it was proposed to reserve for that purpose under this Bill, as explained by the Premier. He would not attempt to say anything further, as the Bill had been allowed to reach this stage. His only object in rising was to say that he was distinctly and strongly opposed to it, and he left all responsibility in connection with it, and the result of it, entirely in the hands of the Government and the supporters of the Bill.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) would ask the hon. member for Beverley not to press his amendment, which seemed to him to be somewhat foreign to the object of the Bill. If they restricted the Bill to its present object they would at any rate be on safe ground. They certainly could not go far wrong, because for every pound they spent there would be something to show in the improvements made on the land. Not only would the money advanced by this Bank be spent in improvements, but also an equivalent sum by the holder of the land; therefore, they would be on very safe ground. But he could not think it would be wise to embark in the direction proposed by the hon. member, and deal with the sale of produce after it had been obtained, which was a very different object from the object of this Bill. The object of this Bill, as indicated by its title, was "for the purpose of assisting the occupation, cultivation, and improvement of agricultural lands." The hon. member's proposal was for dealing with produce after it had been obtained from the land, which he thought was outside the scope of the Bill.

MR. RICHARDSON was quite in accord with the spirit of the amendment, and he thought the object was a good one, and that possibly by extending the scope of the Bill in this direction, and other directions, it might make it more operative. Still, no doubt, it was somewhat widening the original scope and intention of the Bill as expressed on its title page. Nor could it be gainsaid that the measure was entirely in the nature of an experiment; and, that being so, perhaps it would be well to confine its operation at present to the legitimate object of the Bill, and, if experience should show that it was in any way a success, they might be induced hereafter to extend its scope.

MR. RANDELL was inclined to agree that the amendment was a departure from the principle of the Bill, and, in any case, he could not support the hon. member in his endeavour to widen the scope of a Bill in which he had little or no faith. The Bill was essentially a Government measure—it was largely the measure of the head of the Government—and he thought it would be hardly proper (believing as he did that it was not a step in the right direction) for him, or anyone else who was not in accord with the Bill, to support an amendment which altered the scope of the Bill, especially when that amendment did not meet with the concurrence of those who were responsible for the Bill, and who were prepared to accept that responsibility. It might be said hereafter, if they extended the scope of the Bill in this direction, that it had injured the chances of the Bill in accomplishing what the promoters of the Bill expected from it. The position he wished to take up in regard to the Bill was to leave the responsibility of the Bill upon those who supported it and wished to see it become the law of the land.

MR. CLARKSON was very much inclined to support the amendment, because it would widen the scope of the Bill, for, in his opinion, unless the scope of the Bill was made as wide as possible, he feared it would not be taken advantage of. He had supported the second reading because he thought the Bill might possibly in some small way induce people to settle upon the lands of the colony, although he must candidly confess he entertained very little hope it would do very much in

that direction. Still he thought it was only right they should do all they could in that direction, and it was for that reason he felt inclined to support this amendment, so as to increase the utility of the Bill and its chances of success, which he was afraid were not very good.

MR. PIESSE could not agree with the proposed amendment, nor did he see how it came within the scope of the Bill. With regard to the Bill itself, he might mention that there was a petition in course of signature praying that the operation of the Bill might be extended to the holders of land under the W.A. Land Company. When he saw the petition it was then signed by no less than 50 farmers and landholders, representing 25,000 acres of land, who wished to avail themselves of the provisions of the Bill, and who considered themselves as much entitled to assistance under this Bill as those who held land direct from the Crown, inasmuch as the lands which they occupied formed part and parcel of the lands of this colony. If this Bill was to be limited in its operation to helping people on Crown lands only, then these people would be debarred from participating in the advantages which the Bill offered, and a large portion of the Southern part of the colony would derive no benefit at all from the Bill.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said the reason why they limited the Bill to freeholders, or holders of land under special occupation or conditional purchase, or homestead farms, was because the fee simple or the title of these lands would be either in the hands of the holders or in the hands of the Crown, and would be part of the security, whereas, in the case of persons leasing their holdings from the W.A. Land Company the title was in the hands of the Company; and, if the Government advanced money to these persons, and had to foreclose, they would have nothing to sell or to take possession of, in the event of these men not fulfilling their obligations. He quite acknowledged that these people formed part and parcel of the colony, and deserved every encouragement; but, how they were going to be encouraged or assisted under this Bill he could not see, holding their lands as they did under the Company. The thing would be impossible; the hon. member,

as a business man, must see that. He thought the Company should act towards their tenants as the Government proposed in this Bill to act towards the Crown tenants.

MR. HARPER was afraid his amendment did not meet with very much support, but he could not help expressing his astonishment at the position taken up by the leader of Her Majesty's Opposition (Mr. Randell), when he said he washed off all responsibility in respect of this Bill, and would have nothing to do with any amendments proposed in it. That was not the attitude assumed by the leaders of the Opposition party in the House of Commons; however strongly and bitterly they might have opposed the second reading of a measure, if the majority decided to take it into committee, they generally tried to do their best to improve it. But the position taken up by the hon. member for Perth was that he would not try to improve this Bill in any way,—certainly a very remarkable position to take up. In view of the opposition which members had expressed to the amendment he would ask leave to withdraw it, though he felt confident that the necessity for it would be very apparent before many years were over.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

MR. RICHARDSON said the second sub-section of the clause provided that "no advance shall exceed one-half of the fair estimated value of the improvements proposed to be made, and at no time shall the advance or advances to any one person exceed the sum of three hundred pounds." He wished to increase this sum of £300 to £500; and moved that the word "three" be struck out and the word "five" inserted in lieu thereof. He thought it was desirable to help those who might be said to occupy a good position in the agricultural world,—fairly strong men, so far as worldly goods went, and with good holdings, men to whom £300 might not be quite sufficient for the improvements they wished to carry out. If it was a good thing to help the holders of certain sized farms to the extent of £300, it might be, perhaps, even a better thing to help a still better class of farmers. He did not use the term "better class" offensively, but they could easily realise that there were some holders who would require more than £300 to

enable them to carry out their improvements; and, the security in the case of this class of men would, perhaps, be better if you advanced them £500, than it would be in some cases if you only advanced £300.

MR. THROSSELL was inclined to support the amendment. He was not alone in believing that a maximum of £500 would secure a better issue to the Bill.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion) said that, expressing his own individual opinion, he considered it would be well not to increase the amount, and for this reason: the object of the Bill was to distribute as far as possible the amount available under the Bill, so as to help as many people as possible. The amount proposed to be devoted to this purpose, £100,000, was not very large, after all; and he did not think there would be much advantage in pressing the amendment.

MR. A. FORREST thought that £300 was too small altogether, to be of any good in many parts of the colony. In the Southern districts it would be perfectly useless, and even in the Eastern districts it would not clear more than about 100 acres of land, to say nothing of other improvements. If they wanted to get a good class of farmer, they must make the amount larger. The object of the Bill was not to encourage a lot of small men to go in for farming, and to clear three or four acres. His idea was to encourage a good class of men, who would make substantial homesteads for themselves, and become thriving settlers. To this class of men £300 would not be sufficient to help them to carry out such substantial improvements as they would require. It was impossible now, with the present low price of produce, for people to make a living out of small holdings. What was wanted was a good sized holding, and money at a low rate of interest—which was the only good point about this Bill.

MR. LOTON said although opposed, *in toto*, to the Bill, he thought the amendment was one in the right direction, and, if they were going to have such a measure as this at all, and the Government wanted to give it a fair trial, they ought to agree to this amendment. It did not necessarily follow, because they increased the

maximum to £500, that they were going to advance £500 to every applicant. If these men whom they wished to see settled on the soil expected to succeed at all, they must go in for farming on a considerable scale, and keep some live stock; and the Government would be more likely to do good by helping men of that class, instead of tinkering with these 160-acre blocks. After all, £300 would not go far in clearing and fencing; and then these people would require to have tanks or dams for their stock, and to make other improvements, without which their land would not be of much use to them.

MR. R. F. SHOLL said they had been told over and over again by the Premier that the object of this Bill and of the Homesteads Bill was to assist the small farmers, by advancing them small sums, at a low rate, for their small improvements. According to the arguments of some members, farming was a game not worth the candle in these days of fierce competition and low prices. Yet the time of that House was more taken up in devising schemes to assist people in settling on the land than it was with any other class of legislation. It was really becoming more than other classes of the community would stand, to see session after session devoted to assisting the agricultural industry, when they were told that agriculture, as an occupation, was a failure. This sort of thing would eventually work its own cure. People would not stand to be taxed just for the sake of assisting one class of the community, and coddling up an industry which offered no prospect of success to those engaged in it. As to the amendment, he presumed the object of limiting the amount to £300, as the Bill proposed, was so as not to risk too much on one property at one time. But he did not see anything in the Bill to prevent a man obtaining a second advance after he paid off his first advance. What they had to consider was whether the security was good enough, and it was a question whether it would be good enough to justify an advance of £500 at one time. It appeared to him that the success or failure of this Bill depended entirely on its administration; if the administration of the Act was not what it ought to be, it would be good-bye to this £100,000. They had already

agreed to give the land away for nothing, and now they were going to lend money on that land. It was no use opposing the Bill, he knew that; the Government had so many docile followers that they could carry anything they made up their mind for. But he would warn them that when the day of reckoning arrived, when a time of depression followed the present time of prosperity, and there would be a reaction, and taxation to meet, the trouble would be felt more by those members who now supported all this lavish expenditure of public funds than by those who were trying to stem the tide by opposing this expenditure.

MR. SIMPSON said he looked upon this clause as the most vital part of the Bill. It brought them face to face with the functions of the manager, upon whom the whole success or failure of the scheme depended; he was the keystone of the whole fabric. [AN HON. MEMBER: What about the directors?] The directors would be the Ministry for the time being, acting under political influence and political pressure. They were not going to be ruled for ever by the Forrest Ministry, and they might have a Ministry who were not so much interested in the welfare of the agricultural community as the present one, and who would be inclined to let the whole responsibility of working this Bill rest upon the shoulders of the manager. This man would have to combine in himself all the accomplishments of the "god-like" agriculturist referred to by the hon. member for the Williams, and, in addition to that, he would also have to be an accomplished financier. He did not know where they were going to get him, and the other machinery required to carry out this Bill, for a thousand a year. There might be such a man, and, if they could secure him, he did not see why they should not trust him to advance £500 just as well as £300, to induce these poor people to enter the fools' paradise which they were preparing for them in this Bill.

MR. SOLOMON approved of the proposal to increase the amount to £500 as the maximum. If a man could be trusted with £300 he could be trusted with the additional £200, especially when it was borne in mind that these men had already expended, or were prepared to expend, the same amount themselves.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) asked the hon. member to withdraw his amendment and accept £400 instead of the amount he proposed as the maximum. He thought £400 was as far as they could go. He did not think there would be many men—at any rate among those who entered upon the land as new comers—who would be likely to be in a position to avail themselves of a larger amount than £400. It was a considerable amount for one individual. The total amount available under the Bill was not very much, and, if they increased the limit to £500, it would mean that they must assist a smaller number of people. If they made it £500 they could only assist 200 people altogether, if they all wanted to borrow the maximum amount—he did not suppose they would; but he thought £400 would be a safe amount, and as far as they ought to go.

MR. LEAKE said members did not yet seem to grasp the scope of this Bill. The Bill, as pointed out during the second reading, was purely and solely a Bill to support the constituents of the Premier and of the Commissioner of Railways. They knew perfectly well it was meant for the Bunbury district. There was no getting away from that; it was brought in simply for the benefit of that portion of the country. What did this amendment amount to after all? The Bill as it stood provided for the support of 333 electors in the Premier's district, at £300 apiece; whereas, if the amendment was carried, it would support 200 of these unfortunates; and the question before them now was, whether they should agree to support 333 of the Premier's constituents or only 200? Do what they could, he was afraid they would not be able to mutilate the Bill as it deserved.

MR. CLARKSON could not see why it would not be as safe to advance £500 to a man who had already spent £500 in improving his property, out of his own pocket, as to advance £300 to the man who had only spent £300.

MR. THROSELL said, though he had expressed himself in favour of the amendment, it did not seem to him it would make much difference after all whether they fixed the maximum at £300 or £500; because, in order to obtain £500, a man would have to expend £1,000

in improvements. That was not the class of men this Bill was intended to assist. He ventured to say, whatever the maximum might be, it would be smaller amounts, £100 and £200, that would be borrowed under this Bill. While on the subject, he might say that in his opinion there ought to be a clear distinction made between the freeholder and the leaseholder, in respect of the amounts they should be allowed to borrow. At present, the Bill made no distinction between the freeholder and the leaseholder, which he thought was a blot on the Bill. In the case of the man who held his land in fee simple, the freehold alone was a sufficient security, and there was no necessity to insist upon the same improvements in both cases, whether they advanced £500 or £300.

MR. ILLINGWORTH was sorry to find that the supporters of the Bill were inclined to make it even worse than it is, and worse than the Government themselves proposed; and he hoped the Government would resist the suggestion to increase this amount to £500. The great defect of the Bill was the unsatisfactory character of the securities which it contemplated; and if they increased the amount to be advanced without increasing the value of the security, they would simply be increasing the risk. In his opinion, if they even moved from £300 to £400 they would be taking a step in a wrong direction, and still more so if they went from £300 to £500. He hoped the Premier would stick to his own Bill in this particular. If they were going to help people at all they should be people with limited means, and not the man who was prepared to spend £1,000 in improvements. He did not think that was the kind of man that House should lend money to out of public funds.

MR. RICHARDSON said he was prepared to accept the Premier's suggestion, and make the maximum £400, though he would have preferred £500. He entirely disagreed with what had fallen from the hon. member for Nannine, who was clean off the rail on this particular subject. Anyone who knew anything about the subject must know that the security would be far better in the case of the man who could afford to spend £1,000, than in the case of the smaller

man. It was a mistaken idea, too, to suppose that a man would want £1,000 in cash to get £1,000 worth of improvements on his land. He was perfectly sure of one thing: whatever the Government might have to regret in connection with this Bill, it would not be that they had increased this amount from £300 to £400.

MR. R. F. SHOLL thought, while they were about it, they had better increase the amount to £1,000, which would only assist 100 people; and also confine the operations of the Bill either to the Southern districts, or to the Avon Valley, in the neighbourhood of the hon. member for Northam. The cost of administration would be less; there would be fewer people to look after, and the work of superintendence would be confined to one district.

The word "thre." having been struck out,

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved, as an amendment, that the word "four" be inserted in lieu thereof.

Amendment put and passed.

MR. R. F. SHOLL said the third subsection provided that "the rate of interest to be charged on any advance shall not exceed six pounds per centum per annum." He thought the rate of interest should be increased to seven per cent., for he was perfectly certain that a margin of one per cent. would not be sufficient to provide for the cost of administering the Act; and he did not think that those who required to borrow this money would object to pay seven per cent., after what they had been used to paying. The amount charged need not necessarily be seven per cent.; it might be made less. He moved that the word "six" be struck out, and "seven" inserted.

MR. THROSSELL had no objection to the amendment, seeing that the clause would then read "not exceeding seven per cent." To his mind, it was not so much a question of cheap money, as of being able to secure the money on safe terms.

MR. CLARKSON wished the hon. member for the Gascoyne would confine himself to something he understood. It was evident he knew nothing about the conditions of farming in this colony, when he talked about farmers being able to afford to pay seven per cent. If the hon.

member were a farmer himself, he would find that five per cent. would be quite as much as he could afford to pay, and expect to make any profit out of his land.

MR. LOTON understood that the main object of the Bill was to enable farmers to borrow money on easy terms. As a rule, farmers in this colony had not had very much pressure brought to bear upon them to repay what they had borrowed. Squatters, who had borrowed thousands, might have had pressure brought to bear upon them by the financial institutions and others who had advanced them money, but the agriculturists had not. Farmers, as a rule, in this colony, he was pleased to say, were free from this pressure, and were not very much in the debt of financial institutions,—particularly in the Premier's own district, where probably the farmers, as a body, were more independent than in any other part of the colony. Therefore, in his opinion, there was no occasion for this puny bantling to assist them. If it was wanted at all, let the interest be reduced, instead of increasing it.

MR. LEAKE said the Premier, when he moved the second reading of the Bill, led them to believe that this Bank was to be self-supporting. He said: "The interest proposed to be paid on these mortgage bonds is not to exceed five per cent., though I hope that, in many instances, we will be able to obtain money for the Bank at four per cent., or a little over; and we propose to lend the money at interest not exceeding six per cent. The intention of the Government at present is that there shall be a margin of about one per cent. between the interest which the Bank will pay and that which it will receive; so that if capital for the Bank were borrowed at four per cent., the Bank could lend money in small sums to farmers and cultivators at about five per cent."

THE CHAIRMAN said the hon. member was out of order in reading from the report of a speech made in Parliament during the current session.

MR. LEAKE (continuing) said he challenged the Premier, in the face of that quotation, to say that he did not lead the House to believe that this Bill was to pay its own way out of this margin of one per cent. [THE PREMIER: "About

one per cent.," I said.] It was no use quibbling about it. The hon. gentleman knew that was the inducement he offered the House to accept this Bill; it was a trick, a catch expression on his part to induce members to vote for the Bill; first, that it was going to be self-supporting, and, secondly, that it was going to provide cheap money for the farmer,—to borrow at four per cent., and ruin the country by lending it out at five per cent.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause, as previously amended, agreed to.

Clause 19—Advances, how to be paid: Put and passed.

Clause 20—Advances to be secured by mortgage:

MR. THROSSELL said this clause provided that the repayment of every advance under this Act shall be secured to the manager by deed or instrument of mortgage, and, in the case of holdings other than in fee simple, by transfer to the manager of the lease or other document of title. Sometimes, in business transactions, the title deeds were retained as a security by the person advancing the money, and sometimes they were handed back to the borrower with the mortgage money endorsed. He did not know what course the Government proposed to adopt in its dealings under this Bill, but he thought it was all-important that the latter course should be followed, so that the man might be able to obtain temporary assistance elsewhere, while carrying out his improvements. The Government would be quite safe, as they would hold the first mortgage. If the deed were retained by the Government, he was afraid it would to a large extent defeat the object of the Bill.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said if the Government had to foreclose and the land had to be sold, and the farmer had got back his title, there might be a difficulty in obtaining it from him. Or it might in the meantime be deposited with some other financial institution, which would have a lien upon it, and they would not give it up until that lien was paid. There were many objections to adopting the course suggested by the hon. member, and it was considered better that the Government should retain the title. If a man required to borrow more money on the strength of

it, he could always compel the holder of it to produce it, in order to have the second mortgage endorsed upon it.

Mr. PIESSE did not think it made much difference whether the Government or the Bank held the deed, so long as it was handed back when the mortgage was discharged.

Mr. LOTON said if the Government took the first mortgage, and the Bank made a second advance, surely the Government were in a sound position, whether they retained the title deed or not, though, as a matter of prudence, he thought they ought to hold the deed.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 21—"The Governor may, from "the moneys available under this Act, "cause any Crown lands to be cleared, "cultivated, drained, ringbarked, or "fenced; and the Commissioner of "Crown Lands is hereby authorised "and empowered to dispose of such "land on the terms and conditions prescribed by the Land Laws in force for "the time being, with such additional "rent and conditions as the Governor "may direct. Provided that any such "additional rent shall be paid by the "Commissioner to the manager, and shall "form part of the assets belonging to "the said Bank."

Mr. THROSSELL moved that this clause be struck out. It seemed to him it was a departure from the principles of the Bill, though he should very much like to see this clearing, etc., done by the Government. But the conditions contemplated by this clause as to the additional rent appeared to him to be a complete departure from the principle underlying the whole Bill.

Mr. RICHARDSON said no doubt there was a good deal in what the hon. member said as to this clause being outside the general scope of the Bill; but he thought there were elements in it which should commend it to them, more especially as regards the ringbarking. At the same time he thought there was sufficient power under the Loan Bill to provide for ringbarking and draining, and, to that extent, this clause was unnecessary.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said the difficulty would be that the Loan Bill money could not be expended to advantage without this clause. Unless we had an enactment to this effect, there

would be no law under which the Government could dispose of this cleared land at a higher rent under the regulations in force. He admitted the clause was not altogether within the scope of the Bill, but it was inserted in order that opportunity might be taken by the Government to improve some of the Crown lands adjacent to railways by ringbarking and otherwise, and then dispose of them at an additional rent. Unless they had this clause they would be bound to let this land at the same rent as was provided under the ordinary regulations. But they wanted to be able to let it at a rent that would repay the Crown for the expenditure they had incurred in clearing and otherwise improving it. He was not wedded to the words fencing and cultivating; but the wording of the clause had relation to the improvements required under the Land Regulations. He did not suppose the Government would go in for much fencing and cultivation. As the clause had a bearing upon the succeeding clause, which would probably elicit a considerable amount of discussion, he thought it would be as well to adjourn the debate. He moved that progress be reported, and leave given to sit again next day.

Question put and passed.
Progress reported.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 6 o'clock p.m.