Title:

On motion by the Minister for Lands, Title consequentially amended by striking out "road" and inserting "Land" in lieu.

Title, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment and an amendment to the Title.

House adjourned at 9.57 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 27th September, 1932.

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

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Chief Secretary and Mines Regulations.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East) [4.34]: I desire to make a personal explanation. During the debate on the motion for the disallowance of certain regulations under the Mines Regulation Act, several members requested that a schedule should be attached to the regulations concerned defining to what mines they would apply. I had not the opportunity of getting into touch with the Minister for Mines until yesterday, but I have now done so. I assure members that if the motion is withdrawn the Government will be prepared to amend the regulations by adding to them a schedule enumerating those mines to which they will apply.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Thirteenth Day—Conclusion.

Debate resumed from the 22nd September.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East) [4.36]: Before dealing with the Address-in-reply and members' comments on the Speech, I should like to add my congratulations to those which have already been tendered to you, Sir, upon your re-election to the Chair, and to echo the hope that this Chamber may long be privileged to conduct its debates under your able, suave, and impartial guidance. And may I also be permitted, as Leader of the House, to welcome our new members. Mr. Bolton has long been a prominent figure in the State's business world, and possesses considerable experience in public life outside these legislative halls. His utterance in moving the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply was, if I may say so, a notable maiden effort, and shows the hon. member to be no political tyro. Mr. Clydesdale is an old friend within a new place. I trust that the calm atmosphere pervading this Chamber will prove even more congenial to him than the breezier air of another place. The hon. member's wide knowledge covers a large variety of men and affairs, and I have no doubt that his experience of life, business and sport—this last being an important element of the Australian scene—will aid materially in our deliberations. Mr. Moore is an old and even better known friend with an unaltered countenance. The hon. member will, I feel sure, pardon my describing him, for the nonce, as a strayed sheep restored to the fold, since my only alternative would be to recall the prodigal son. That cordial fellow-feeling which is so marked and so agreeable a feature of Western Australian politics, always finds pleasure in the re-appearance of a familiar face, especially in a Chamber which has no eye for political complexions. Mr. Moore is too well known to members to allow of my doing more than allude to his Parliamentary and personal qualities. In Mr. Harold Piesse the House receives another accession of strength from a distinguished family, whose name is written large across the history of Western Australian self-government. Since the Hon. F. H. Piesse, nearly forty years ago, accepted the portfolio of Railways under John Forrest, this Parliament

has hardly been without a representative chosen from among the Piesse's of Katanning. For lengthy periods the family has, as is the case now, contributed a member to each Chamber. Thus the happiest auguries attend Mr. Harold Piesse's entry into Parliamentary life. The cordiality of the welcome extended to our new colleagues does not exclude expressions of regret for old members who, in the too familiar phrase, have fallen by the wayside. Mr. Kempton and Sir William Lathlain are missed here, personally as well as politically. Especially painful is the gap left by Mr. Glasheen, whose unsatisfactory state of health has necessitated retirement into private life. Needless to say, every sympathy and the heartiest good wishes of members accompany Mr. Glasheen in his quest for renewed vigour.

As in connection with the two preceding debates of this nature, I have to express my appreciation of the spirit of the discussion and generally of the tone of members' comments and criticisms. Their speeches have been marked by a sense of the disabilities and limitations imposed on the Government by world conditions, as reflected within our borders. "Depression," I am well aware, has become almost a parrot-cry; more's the pity. To enlarge on the subject at this juncture is unnecessary and unprofitable, especially as much of what I have to say regarding finance will develop in the course of my reply to the debate. Accordingly I now turn to the various utterances of members. The record of the Government proves that they share to the full Mr. Bolton's desire for economy wherever practicable. Reduction in the number of members of Parliament, which the hon. member advocates, seemingly, as an economy pure and simple, involves considerations other than finance, and no less important. Mr. Bolton has opened up a very large question indeed, and I fear that any attempt on my part to deal with it at all adequately would occupy more of the time of the House than is justifiable on this occasion. Certainly the hon. member has the courage of his opinions when he suggests the closing-down of this Legislature in favour of administration by half-a-dozen commissioners over a term of half-a-dozen years. Selection of these six semi-Cromwells or half-Mussolinis would, in my opinion, be something of a feat whether achieved by the electors or by some life-size Cromwell or locally and full-grown Mussolini. If the choice were made by ballot, the electioneering speeches would, I imagine, prove more interesting and entertaining than any self-presented testimonials as yet placed on record—that is to say, by unsuccessful candidates. It is to be feared that in such a race, Modest Worth would be left at the post. On the other hand, the supposed latter-day large-size Cromwell or Australian maximum Mussolini would be either sub-human or super-human if he omitted to head the list of commissioners with his own name; and Western Australians might have to prepare themselves for an autocrat or dictator suggesting an amalgam of Mr. Lang and the late General Booth. Viewed even along these optimistic lines, the prospect is hardly enticing. Western Australia would be merely repeating an experiment tried by the Old Country about 300 years ago, under the Lord Protector Cromwell and his major-generals. That one trial has satisfied the British people up to now. Even under the stress of the war they clung to parliamentary government. My firm hope and strong belief are that the existing legislative system in Western Australia will easily survive the depression.

Mr. Bolton's fears as to the scheme for bulk-handling of wheat are, I submit, groundless. The proposal is to create a trust to control bulk-handling, with Government backing. Borrowing powers will be conferred on the trust, which should, in the Government's opinion, consist of five members —three to be elected by the wheatgrowers and two to be nominated by the Government. Nothing in the nature of a State owned or State-controlled scheme is contemplated. The formal exclusion of the State Implement Works from the scope of the State Trading Concerns Act need occasion neither alarm nor suspicion. The object, I am glad to inform Mr. Bolton, is merely to save expense. The State Implement Works are now in liquidation; the implement section has been closed down entirely, except that provision has been made to supply spare parts to those people who own machines which were manufactured there. Regarding the engineering section, for some time past no private work has been done, and it exists merely as a workshop for government requirements. There is conse-

quently no longer any occasion to observe the procedure laid down by the State Trading Concerns Act as regards balance sheets and so forth. In reply to the hon. member's comments on the Workers' Compensation Act, all I can say at present is that the question of amending the measure is still under consideration.

Mr. Holmes, as always, was forceful and interesting; but I note with personal, rather than political, concern that the hon. member has yielded once again to temptation and claimed that yet another of his prophecies has been verified by the event. However this tendency does not necessarily prove a slackening of intellectual fibre. Most likely the claim was let slip during a moment of abstraction. I am unable to believe that the hon. member feels any elation whatever at having shown himself a true prophet of evil. An unfriendly critic—and I have as little desire to be critical of Mr. Holmes as to be at odds with him—might urge that the prediction of one of two alternatives is like foretelling a change in the weather: Such a prophecy, repeated often enough and long enough, is bound to be realised. For Mr. Holmes's kind and considerate allusion to the state of my health, I am sincerely grateful to him. The hon. member remarked with some bitterness upon the fact that the Lieut-Governor's Speech made no explicit reference to the North-West, a part of Western Australia which, quite naturally and properly, is especially dear to Mr. Holmes's heart, but in the exclusion of which the hon. member complains, the North Province is by no means singular. The Speech being a document of extremely general character, the same slight—if slight it be—is put upon many other portions of the State. Perhaps the hon. member may not be unwilling to regard the four Ministers who lately visited the North-West and the Committee for North-Western Development, as some compensation for the omitted reference.

Mr. Holmes's description of the operations relating to the "miniature Suez Canal" near Harvey, and the drainage of the Peel Estate, is very largely in the hon. member's well-known style of caricature. Whether he intended all his remarks on the subject to be taken quite seriously, I do not know, but I think not. To his strictures on these operations, the Works Department have furnished the following reply:—

> There are no draglines on the Peel Estate, the last machine there having left in November, 1930, for the Wellesley canalisation. No. 75A, ex Busselton drainage, is being erected at Waterloo for work on Roelands irrigation, and thence on to the Harvey River diversion. No. 75B is waiting on the Harvey River diversion for the ground to become dry enough to work on. No. 10 dragline is being assembled at Waroona for work on Mayfield's drain. The exceptional depth of the two main cuts on the diversion is such that the two machines would have to work together, one above the other, to remove the excavation, the higher machine tipping into tramway waggons to dispose of the spoil. The resultant cost would be higher than that of the method actually employed. The "seven shovelsful" per barrow is newspaper reporting. Actually, the barrows are adequately filled; that is to say, discrimination is used by the gangers regarding length of lead, height of lift, etc. The "army of tally clerks" consists of one ganger per 100 men actually at work. Half of the excavation reserved for what is erroneously called "barrow work" has been taken out by approved engineering methods; namely, drays and tramway trucks with windies, and at a cost below what the double-banked draglines could have done the work for, on account of the previously mentioned extraordinary depth of cut and great length of lead for disposal of spoil.

That is the department's explanation, and I think it should satisfy Mr. Holmes.

Mr. Drew criticised what he described as the Government's amendment of the mining regulations, which substituted for the system of rebates formerly applying to low-grade ore, a flat rate for crushing. Perhaps I may be permitted to say that the Government's practice, or at all events the Government's endeavour, is to remedy, as far as possible, any defects discovered in the regulations. Numerous amendments have, in fact, been made, with the object of suiting regulations to altered conditions. However, the hon. member is under a misapprehension when he states that the rebates have recently been discarded in favour of a flat rate. The flat rate for crushing charges has been in force for the past twenty years. Prior to that time, there were variations; but these were abolished on account of persistent requests, from prospectors all over the State, for a flat rate. After the outbreak of the Great War, in order to encourage the production of gold, a scale of rebates was arranged in respect of low-

grade ore treated at State batteries, as follows:—

Ore Value.	Rebate per ton.
8 dwts. and under 9 dwts. ..	10 per cent.
7 dwts. and under 8 dwts. ..	20 „
6 dwts. and under 7 dwts. ..	30 „
Under 6 dwts.	40 „

with a minimum charge of 5s. per ton.

Flate rate charges were: 10s. 6d. per ton,; or, per hour, 10 stamps 16s. 6d., five stamps 8s. 6d. The normal price of gold then obtained was £4 4s. 11½d. per fine ounce. Then came the depression: Great Britain went off the gold standard, and the value of gold to-day, with the premium, is approximately £7 per fine ounce. Consequently the rebates were abolished. This entails no hardship on the low-grade prospector, as he gets the increased value of his gold.

It is not considered that there is any merit in the suggestion that the man getting 4 ounces to 20 ounces per ton should pay more for crushing than the man on low-grade ore. There is no comparison of costs in a prospector's return. It may cost a man three times as much to mine ore worth one ounce to the ton as it costs to mine low-grade, soft, and easily-broken material. Ore of high-grade usually has a high tailing content, and as the Mines Department deduct a portion of the tailings for treatment charges, and, as regards such portion, receive the premium on the gold value, it is plain that the high-grade prospector actually, through this means, pays the department more. To treat every parcel on its individual merits is impracticable, as such a system would involve giving each parcel a special, separate inquiry. This would entail the employment of a staff of inspectors for that particular work. An important point is that the flat rate charged by the Mines Department is as low as, and usually lower than, the rate charged at any private battery. There is a want of logic in the contention that to charge rates varying with ore values would be to fit the burden to the back. Very often the more fortunate man is the miner of low-grade ore, and not the miner of high-grade ore.

Mr. Drew also criticised the Federal Government's action in putting through the Federal Parliament a Bill for the control of certain State expenditure. This legislation was explained in the course of Sir Charles Nathan's speech on the Address-in-reply. As the representative of the Government in this Chamber I was gratified at Sir Charles Nathan's recognition—in the course of a notable utterance—of the improved state of affairs generally. I highly appreciate Sir Charles's speech as of real value to Western Australia and to the Commonwealth as a whole. The hon. member's remarks should hearten the Doubting Thomas's who are still unable to realise that things are on the up-grade. Sir Charles's speech was built on sure and solid foundations. If his arguments and conclusions stood in need of further support, it could be found in an analysis of the trade balance of business. The results of such an analysis fully re-echo the note of confidence which was struck by the hon. member.

Mr. Thomson offered some criticism, admittedly friendly, of the Agricultural Bank and the Industries Assistance Board. On the question, raised by the hon. member, of the apportionment of departmental administrative costs as between the bank and the board, I cannot do better than quote some statements made by me last session in reply to observations on the same subject by Sir Charles Nathan. My remarks appear in "Hansard," Volume 87, page 5537, under date of 1st December, 1931, and are as follows:—

> . . . the practice in the past has been to apportion the costs of administration equally between the Agricultural Bank and the Industries Assistance Board . . . . That method, which worked equitably enough while the board's operations were active, will not be adopted in preparing the accounts for the current term, because it is estimated that an expense rate of not more than one per cent. of the average amount of advances will meet the altered conditions of the board.

Mr. Thomson suggests a committee of financial experts to inquire into, and make recommendations regarding the bank's system of accounts; but I assure the House that the bank's methods of bookkeeping are modern and efficient. Hon. members are, of course, aware that the institution's accounts are audited by the Auditor General. Obviously, no system of accountancy can bridge the gulf between profitable industry and industry that is non-profitable. Such a position can be rectified only by a return of payable prices for farm produce, for it is on this that the collection of interest and the maintenance of security values must depend. While on this

subject, I may mention that the practice has been to bring only ascertained losses into account. This practice may not be in keeping with commercial usage, but it must be borne in mind that the nature of the bank's activities does not admit of the application of strict commercial principles. The bank has to build its own securities, and in the fulfilment of its functions has been compelled, during that process, to run risks which no trading institution could consider. Mr. Thomson also referred to an item of £19,917, shown in the accounts as advances made by the bank to group settlers for payment of fees. The amount includes survey fees and cost of issue of titles, besides the registration of mortgage fees. The whole of the sum in question represents out-of-pocket charges paid by the bank on account of its mortgagors. For its services in this connection the bank has made no charge whatever.

In reply to the hon. member's advocacy of decentralisation, a modified system of decentralisation has been in operation for several years in this sphere of Government activities. However, wtih the object of making district allowances more fully autonomous, there is now in hand a re-organisation under which branch executives will be solely responsible for supervision of their securities and control of finance. All the bank's mortgagors have been notified that in future they will be required to transact all business through their respective district offices. When the re-organisation has been completed, all customers of the bank will be granted an interview at the bank's head office unless in the district manager's opinion the matter is one for determination by the head office. Hon. members who, after the completion of the re-organisation, may be requested by constituents to arrange interviews with officials in the head office, will be assisting the bank by keeping this in mind. Mr. Thomson criticised various matters relating to the Workers' Homes system and the administration. The hon. member's statement that dwellers in wooden houses are paying only 5s. per week may be described as partly correct, but in making it he confuses Housing Trust cottages with Workers' Homes Board cottages. I am informed by the board that the average weekly instalment payable by clients dwelling in remodelled group cottages is between 10s. and 12s., which is as much as they can afford. These cottages are presentable as well as roomy and comfortable; and they are proving a boon to many workers who could not have obtained other homes. The weekly instalment of 5s. applies to Housing Trust cottages, which have been erected under the Housing Trust Act, a philanthropic measure. The instalment is also intended to cover rates, taxes, and renovations. As regards Housing Trust cottages, no payment whatever is even requested. The funds by means of which the Housing Trust Act is operated were provided partly by a donation from Sir Charles McNess and partly by a contribution made by the Government from the Commonwealth grant for relief of unemployment. With regard to workers' homes, the great pity of a most admirable scheme is that many people erected houses greatly in excess of their means; that is to say, their means before the advent of the depression. In Queensland and New Zealand houses costing up to £5,000 are built of wood—in New Zealand mainly of Western Australian timbers. Yet many of our local authorities capriciously proclaim brick areas, and this means that people are led, in some cases forced, to erect buildings far beyond their means, whereas a wooden house, durable and of good appearance, and answering all their requirements, would have been well within their financial strength. The Government intend, so far as finance will allow, to supply persons in comparatively poor circumstances—due to the prevailing economic position—with homes that will be commensurate in point of cost with such persons'—only temporarily, it is hoped—reduced earnings. In general, people are likely to turn to a class of home whose cost will not prove too burdensome, a class of home which they will have a good chance of ultimately owning. A most regrettable feature of this unhappy depression is that many people have had to abandon homes on which they had spent a fair sum of money.

Mr. Thomson made some pointed and definite criticisms on State Sawmills competition with private timber merchants. The hon. member's principal contentions were:—

(1) That in connection with Government works the successful tenderer is bound to obtain from the State trading concerns such goods and materials as those concerns manufacture or handle;

(2) That the State Sawmills charge Government departments prices higher than those obtained from the general public; and that the State Sawmills are, in effect, living on Government timber orders;

(3) That the State Sawmills are now employing a heavily increased percentage of the total number of workers in the timber industry.

Hon. A. Thomson: The statement is correct, too.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: As regards statement No. 1, the Treasury stipulate that where State-owned stocks are available, supplies for Government works shall be drawn from such stocks, the obvious and highly desirable and necessary aim being to conserve the actual cash position of the Government. The financial position has rendered this necessary, and as it is part of the Government's policy, no further comment is offered by me.

As regards statement No. 2, during a recent deputation to the Premier this assertion was made. It has been exhaustively investigated by Treasury officials, at the express direction of the Premier. There is no stability of timber prices; nearly all business is done on quotation. The Public Works Department and other Government departments, however, obtain the best discounts offered and these are as a rule considerably in excess of those allowed to the public and contractors. A good illustration of this is the Harvey and Roelands drainage works, for which timber has been quoted at approximately 50 per cent. off the list. A detailed report on this was submitted on the 7th June last, definitely setting out that the Government discount had been increased from time to time, as the market had drifted. At that time 33½ per cent. off the list was the general price to the Government, although 40 per cent. off the list had been allowed in special instances. As already stated, up to 50 per cent. is now being allowed.

Statement No. 2 seems to be a reflection upon the Public Works Department engineers, who, as the State Sawmills know to their cost, are particularly keen to get jobs done at the lowest possible figure. Private competitors have from time to time taken the trouble to send various engineers' quotations considerably below the keenest market price, apparently with a view to forcing the State Sawmills to supply to Government works at less than the cost of production. The Government orders represent only a comparatively small percentage of the total turnover of the State Sawmills, as even now approximately 45 per cent. of sales are export business. Of the balance, by far the greater proportion is obtained from local trading other than Government business.

As regards statement No. 3, the State Sawmills' percentage of the total number of men employed in the timber industry has naturally increased, as the State Sawmills have made special efforts to keep their employees working. This is shown by the continued running of Manjimup mill, and also by the fact that part-time working, which is admittedly more costly, obtains throughout the State mills and yards. In point of fact, even under these conditions, the number of men employed by the State Sawmills is considerably less than it was three years ago. Private trading firms are, apparently, less concerned about the unemployment position than about realising their heavy stocks on hand. I should like to add that the administration of the State Sawmills has gone outside the methods of ordinary business working in order to keep those engaged in the sawmilling industry at least sufficiently employed to enable them to provide themselves with the absolute necessaries of life. The State Sawmills administration took this course instead of adopting the course chosen by other sawmillers, namely, the closing down of all but a few mills and working those few full time, thereby avoiding the losses which are inevitably entailed by working a number of mills part time. The aim of the State Sawmills administration has been to keep as many men as possible at work, rather than throw a much larger proportion of them on to sustenance. The aim has also been to assist the men in preserving independence of spirit; for it must be recognised that the average man experiences a smaller or larger measure of humiliation when he finds himself obliged to depend upon sustenance.

Mr. Piesse's suggestion that two clerks and road board secretaries be appointed by the Government at a small fee to fill in and receive enrolment cards has been referred to the Chief Electoral Officer, who reports:

The secretaries of all road boards and town clerks of all municipalities are appointed as honorary Government electoral agents, and in that capacity they are supplied with claim cards and copies of all electoral rolls issued by the electoral office. Local governing bodies are called upon to supply a good deal of information to the Electoral Department according to Section 35 of the Electoral Act, and such information is used in the compilation of rolls. As to the enrolment of electors, much

depends upon the personnel of the town clerk of a municipality or the secretary of a road board. The Department is not financially able to pay for the services so rendered, but whenever the opportunity offers at election times, or when special inquiries are being made, the returning officers and registrars avail themselves of the services of officers of local government bodies and payment is made therefor.

In the event of a fee being paid, the cost would perhaps not be very great in the country districts, but in the metropolitan area the expense would be a matter for serious consideration.

It must also be remembered that the records and card index of the Electoral Department are always at the disposal of the local governing bodies for the supply of information.

Mr. Fraser expressed astonishment at the Government's action in charging local authorities with expenses incurred by the State while dealing with cases of infectious disease that have occurred in the various health districts. I wish to point out that in all public health legislation provision is made for dealing with infectious cases. Local health authorities and their officers are given certain powers in regard to precautionary measures that are necessary to prevent the spread of infection. These precautions include the examination of contacts, the isolation of infected persons, the disinfection of premises and things, and the care of cases in isolation hospitals. It is usual in health legislation to empower the local authorities themselves to establish isolation hospitals or to contract for the hospitalisation of their cases. Similar power is contained in our Health Act, and has been for many years. It needs little imagination to realise the important bearing these responsibilities have upon the manner in which local authorities carry out their functions. Infectious diseases are largely preventible, and the number of cases arising in a district is usually in directly inverse ratio to the effectiveness of the precautionary measures adopted. Therefore, as local authorities are responsible for the hospitalisation of infectious cases, they are, in consequence of that responsibility, likely to be all the more careful to take such measures as will reduce these cases to the minimum number. It may be suggested that the situation has changed since the passing of the Hospital Fund Act, but on the other hand, why should the advent of that Act change the basic principles of the system described, which is in force the world over wherever up to date health legislation operates?

I feel sympathetic towards the views expressed by Mr. Fraser on the Dog Act and, more particularly, a local court case which resulted adversely to a dog-owner. The subject, I must repeat, falls within the local authorities' province; but I have brought the matters mentioned under the notice of the Minister for Works, who will doubtless communicate with the hon. member. In regard to another matter raised by Mr. Fraser, the respective numbers of manual labourers employed by municipalities two years ago and at present are not ascertainable from any information in the Government's possession. This is purely a municipal matter.

Mr. Mann passed some severe strictures on the present condition of the Caves House. Admittedly, that condition is unsatisfactory; and with a view to its being altered an investigation is proceeding. Efforts in this regard must, however, be governed by the funds available for the purpose.

In reply to Mr. Hall's rather remarkable assertions regarding the reduction of railway fares within the metropolitan area, I have to inform the hon. member that the reduction was recommended by the Commissioner and approved by the Minister for Railways. As to railway fares in the country, it is impossible, having regard to the relatively small number of passengers, to adopt the same basis as now obtains in the metropolitan area. The universal practice is to charge on a lower scale for travel in the metropolitan area than for travel in country districts. Trains have to be run at a loss in these districts in order to give country residents a service. It has to be remembered that country passengers passing over the suburban system obtain the benefit of the reduced scale, and, similarly, that city residents pay on the higher scale when travelling into the country. The question of revising country fares will be examined during this financial year, after the financial result of reduction in metropolitan fares has become known. The Midland Railway Company's cheap rate between Perth and Geraldton was introduced for the purpose of cutting out a steamer which was trading between Fremantle and Geraldton and was used by Geraldton merchants only when they could not utilise the State steamer. I may mildly urge the view that the Midland Railway Company's profits were not entirely the

result of this particular rate. The hon. member, when advocating reduced rail freights and fares, should bear in mind that the carrying-out of what he recommends would deprive the State of revenue, and that the shortage would necessarily have to be made good by taxation—as already the railway system is a losing propositon. If I might be permitted to add a word of advice, it would be that the hon. member, before making serious allegations, should be at the trouble of verifying them by inquiring in the authoritative quarter. The adoption of such a course would have saved him from committing himself to such an utterance as the following:—

> Who was responsible for reducing the fares in the metropolitan area? It is stated that the Government refused to do this, but after the trains had been run empty for a couple of years they acceded to the request of the Commissioner.

The same advice applies, if with less force, to Mr. Hall's reference to abandoned farms which are mortgaged to the Agricultural Bank. Here is part of what the hon. member said on that subject:—

> I should like to know from the Minister whether any consideration has ever been given to doing anything with our abandoned farms, beyond placing caretakers on them. I understand that there are no fewer than 1,000 abandoned farms, representing some tens of thousands of public money.

In regard to these observations, with others couched by Mr. Hall in the same genial tone, I would like to say that the number of farms of all classes on the hands of the Agricultural Bank is approximately 900. These include a considerable number of salt holdings which have been condemned for wheatgrowing. They are suitable for grazing purposes only and are not saleable at the present time. Every effort is being made to dispose of holdings, with considerable success. For the year ended 30th June last, 380 properties were sold, and since that date an additional 85 have been disposed of. The bank has refused to sacrifice its securities, and in consequence many offers have been turned down, it being considered advisable to hold good properties in the expectation of values appreciating. Wherever possible share-cropping leases of vacant farms are arranged. This is done on a considerable scale, with the result that the cleared land is maintained and the bank receives a substantial amount in reduction of the various accounts. It would not be an economic proposition for the bank to attempt to farm abandoned holdings except on a share basis. Immediately a settler abandons, action is taken to protect the loose assets, and they are either promptly sold or placed in safe custody. It is quite correct to say that vandalism is rampant, and that the bank is subjected to much loss by vandals destroying houses and fences. The demand for properties has increased recently and better times are anticipated. In this regard the bank is considering the advisability of sending a representative to the Eastern States with a view to disposing of farms.

Mr. Williams's comments upon the Forest Department's administration of mining timber supplies on the Eastern Goldfields were anticipated, last year, by Mr. Harris, at whose instance papers bearing on the matter were laid on the Table. Within carting distance of State railways, the available supply is limited. If unrestricted cutting of mining timber on reserves adjacent to the Widgiemooltha railway were permitted, the supply there would speedily be exhausted and the adoption of the present policy necessitated. The Kurrawang Company have never, I understand, sought this particular business, but have been prevailed upon to facilitate extraction of mining timber in advance of cutting for firewood. Undoubtedly, in the best interests of the mining industry, this arrangement should continue. The question of providing a more permanent and adequate water supply for the Ora Banda area, which was raised by Mr. Williams in this debate, is receiving the careful consideration of the Works and Mines Departments. Last month Mr. Blatchford, of the Mines Department, and Mr. Weller, Chief Engineer for Goldfields Water Supply, visited the district; and investigations are still being pursued. It is expected that within a month or two the departments concerned will be able to make a joint recommendation to the Government. In the meantime it is satisfactory to know that the local dams, from which supplies are being obtained, are sufficiently full to run the State mill for some months to come. The Government Geologist is closely watching developments from a gold-mining point of view.

Mr. Williams has suddenly discovered that Esperance has been badly treated in regard to jetty and railway facilities. Now, it is passing strange that the hon. member did not make this discovery during the term of the previous Government, which the hon. member always supported, which enjoyed the advantage of huge amounts of loan money, together with a buoyant revenue and excellent returns from Public Utilities. This favourable situation existed over a period of six years, throughout which the Esperance district was represented in another place by a valued member of the Labour Government. Yet during those six years Esperance received nothing but sweet platitudes from the Government; nothing was done for either the town or the port.

Hon. J. Cornell: Oh, no! The previous Government built the line from Norseman to Salmon Gums. Give them that credit.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: We are at present discussing another subject. Now, when practically no money is available, Mr. Williams complains that Esperance has been neglected, and he throws the blame for that neglect on the present Government. In reply to that part of Mr. Williams's speech dealing with tuberculosis men, I desire to state that there has been no alteration in the method of dealing with such men who are reported to be fit for work, since the present Government took office. Since as far back as 1927, such men have been allowed to continue at work on the surface of the mines. The practice followed by the department, when a man is reported by the laboratory to be suffering from tuberculosis, is to arrange for Dr. Mitchell of Wooroloo to examine him as to his fitness for work as soon as possible. If the doctor certifies he is fit for work, and the mine is prepared to find him a suitable job on the surface, notice prohibiting him from employment is withheld for the time being, and he is allowed to carry on; that is, provided the doctor considers the position a suitable one for the man, and that he is not a danger to the health of the other employees. His rights under the Act, however, are not prejudiced in any way; and if he becomes incapacitated, the prohibition notice is then served, and he becomes entitled to compensation in respect of himself and his dependants. All dangerous tuberculosis cases are withdrawn from the mines immediately they are reported by the laboratory. If a suitable position cannot be found for a man on the surface, he is prohibited, and the only other work available is prospecting or work on the coast. All of the men are not fitted for prospecting; and the only alternative for those who are not, is to bring them down to Perth, involving the breaking-up of their homes, and life-long associations, and employing them on work to which they have never been accustomed. Most of the men prefer work on the surface, if they can obtain it, where they are employed in the open air and sunshine, and in positions free from dust. It is extremely doubtful whether more suitable employment could be found for such men. A man who is allowed to continue at work on the surface of a mine is reviewed by Dr. Mitchell from time to time. The late Mr. Stephen Coffey, the man referred to by Mr. Williams, was reviewed by Dr. Mitchell on the 9th June last, and the doctor's report was as follows:—

> Coffey, Stephen.—Feels well, no cough or expectoration, no active signs or symptoms. Carry on.

At that time Mr. Coffey's health, apparently, was fairly good, but on visiting Kalgoorlie again on the 4th August, Dr. Mitchell was advised that Coffey was ill, and he visited him at his home. The doctor then reported as follows:—

> Coffey, Stephen.—Is a very sick man, acutely ill, and appears to me to be permanently incapacitated.

On receipt of this report, notice prohibiting Coffey was forwarded on the 12th August, but the department were subsequently notified that he died on the 10th August. As he was entitled to be prohibited, however, his name was registered, as required by the Act, thereby entitling his dependants to compensation, and his widow has been in receipt of compensation in respect of herself and six children at the rate of £3 18s. per week as from 11th August. Any person, even in the best of health, is liable to contract a chill, develop pneumonia, and die within a month or two. The tuberculous miners are treated with every sympathy and consideration, and the great majority of the men appreciate the consideration shown them.

The other case referred to by Mr. Williams is that of a man who was forced to cease work at a mine on the 11th August, 1928, owing to an accident which resulted in the loss of one eye, for which loss he re-

ceived a lump sum settlement under the Workers' Compensation Act, amounting to £344. When he was able to resume work, he submitted himself for re-examination on the 6th February, 1930, but was found to be suffering from miners' phthisis plus tuberculosis; consequently the laboratory doctor was unable to grant him a certificate, and as he had not been engaged in mining operations during the 12 months preceding the 6th February, 1930, he could not be prohibited and compensated under the Miners' Phthisis Act. Two laboratory doctors, however, subsequently certified that, in their opinion, the clinical records and X-ray films on this man's examination on the 18th June, 1929, when he was diagnosed as "Miners' phthisis advanced," showed all the evidence necessary for a diagnosis of tuberculosis, and he was then prohibited, and compensated at the rate of £2 9s. 6d. per week. He thereupon lodged an application for compensation for his wife, and made a statutory declaration that she was totally dependent upon him for support, and had no other income, and was accordingly allowed an additional £1 per week on her account. It subsequently came to the knowledge of the department, however, that his wife had an income of 15s. 4d. per week, being interest on £800 on fixed deposit in a bank. The regulations, which were approved by the previous Government, provide that in the case of partial dependants, such weekly sums shall be paid as may be approved by the Minister. The man was accordingly allowed the difference between 15s. 4d. and £1 per week, but was required to refund the overpayment. No man prohibited under the Act is questioned as to his means; but when a man claims compensation for dependants, proof is required that such dependants were wholly or in part dependent upon his earnings at the date he was certified as incapacitated from work.

Hon. J. Cornell: Surely the Minister would not argue that the wife is not dependent on her husband?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There was an income in the case of this wife.

Hon. J. Cornell: The Act was never intended to apply in that manner.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The man referred to was eligible for and could have claimed compensation under the Third Schedule of the Workers' Compensation Act before he was prohibited under the Miners' Phthisis Act, but apparently he preferred the higher compensation under the latter Act.

As to Mr. Williams's assertions regarding the Kalgoorlie plant, Mr. Williams has never taken the trouble to ascertain the true facts of the case, and is so incorrect in his estimation of the value of plants generally, that it may be advisable to give the Government's reasons for taking over this plant. In 1928, the State battery customers supplied only 16,800 tons of ore at all State batteries, and many plants were closed down, sold or leased as opportunity arose. The sudden revival of mining, due to the depression and exchange, found the Treasury without funds, and the Mines Department with a depleted staff, and a number of plants, some of them 30 years old, and out of commission for years; yet with little capital expenditure these plants were put into sufficiently good working order to treat 63,000 tons for the year ended 31st December, 1931. At the beginning of this year, the congestion at Coolgardie was becoming acute, and no funds were available. To ease the position, arrangements were made for State battery customers to crush at Sawyer Bros., Menzies, the Copperhead Mill at Bullfinch, and at Hunt Bros., Kalgoorlie. In addition, a special cartage subsidy of 7s. 6d. per ton was allowed to Broad Arrow district customers who crushed at Coolgardie, to assist them to take their ore to Ora Banda. Notwithstanding these palliative measures, Coolgardie still remained so much congested that meetings of all the public bodies on the goldfields clamoured for further crushing facilities. The provision of a departmental plant was out of the question, as money was not available. The department was paying up to £200 per month in crushing and cartage subsidies to relieve the situation. No private individual or syndicate had sufficient faith in the maintenance of the high price of gold to risk capital in a plant, though some owners of private plants were receiving full supplies of ore, and obtaining higher rates for treatment than were the State batteries, and in addition were demanding 2s. per ton subsidy from the Government.

At this time an offer was made by the Western Machinery Company to rebuild the 10-head mill on the Ironsides North, which was centrally situated, and close to Golden Gate siding. The only portion of the old plant used was the ore bin, part of the mill

building, and the 10-head mill frame. The plant when handed over to the department consisted of elevated ramp, grizzly rock breaker and elevator to bins, permitting ore to be tipped directly from the trucks and costing little more than if the ore were unloaded from trucks on a siding, as at Coolgardie, and saving the cost of such siding. Most of the remaining plant and equipment was new, or foundry new, consisting of battery spares boxes, tables, pumps and complete power plant, consisting of an 80 h.p. gas engine, and 100 h.p. producer plant. Granolithic floors in mill, engine room, complete set of offices, etc., were all provided. The estimated cost of a 10-head plant on approximately the same lines with new material would be at least £10,000, and Mr. Williams should be well aware that this money cannot be provided. To summarise the position, the chief reasons for complaint by Mr. Williams are:—1, Inefficiency of Kalgoorlie plant; 2, Conditions of lease.

Despite the fact that Mr. Williams states that this old plant will not do much more than 350 tons per month, in the 4½ months to the 31st August—the first period of our lease—the battery crushed 4,362 tons, or approximately 1,000 tons per month, through a 900 mesh screen. The efficiency of the mill has been such that customers have hired it by the hour, and instead of its costing them the flat rate of 10s. 6d. per ton, the average charge has been 8s. 2d. These figures are as good as or better than those of the Coolgardie plant, which is considered the equal of any public crushing plant in the Commonwealth. It might also be stated that not a single complaint has been received from any customer.

As to Mr. Williams's second point, I say that though the plant will cost £21 to £30 per week, according to the tonnage coming forward, it is saving the department at present approximately £50 per week in cartage and crushing subsidies. If the only alternative suggestion put up after the Government had agreed to lease the present plant —namely that the department should continue a subsidy to a local mill-owner, who would agree to erect a further 10-head of stamps—had been accepted, the department would have had to pay on an increased tonnage of 1,000 tons per month (the average crushed by the Kalgoorlie battery) a further £100 per month, making a total of £300. Moreover, the prospector would have had 3 dwts. deducted from his tailings to cover treatment, instead of the 2 dwts. 8 grs. now charged by the department, which at present makes a difference to the owner of 3s. 5d. per ton. Also, whilst we have had more stoppages than were expected, the Government have protected themselves by insisting on the lessors replacing any defective plant within a period of four months after taking over, and where it could be definitely proved that the fault was the lessor's, this has been done, even to the supply of practically a new elevator system, the one installed proving unsatisfactory. The Government have also protected themselves in respect of any additions, as even if the industry declines—Mr. Williams apparently thinks it will within the next five years—the lessor must buy these improvements at 50 per cent. of their initial cost, or the Government have the right to remove them within a stated time. It is convenient here to combat another statement by the hon. member, in regard to sustenance to prospectors. The true position is that at present the Government, through the medium of the Unemployment Relief Depot, are extending sustenance to some 600 destitute prospectors, at a weekly cost of £315, and that the Government are and always have been prepared to supply tools to those who have substantiated their bona fides.

The Government agree with Sir Edward Wittenoom that a consolidation of Western Australian statutes is an urgent necessity, and it affords me pleasure to inform the hon. member that Mr. W. F. Sayer, K.C., formerly Solicitor General, has been engaged on the work of consolidation ever since his retirement from office. This work is being done at no cost whatever to the State. Sir Edward remarked that the State Shipping Service had not been established with any intention of carrying tourists all over the world. The service conducts tours, but only in connection with voyages that are undertaken because of cargo offering. State ships visit only such places as present opportunities for increasing Western Australia's trade.

Dealing with Mr. Miles's suggestion that the money paid by the Government by way of exchange should be used to subsidise the primary industries, I fear the hon. member's ideas in regard to exchange are very confused. One would imagine that, as a

primary producer himself, before making the statements he did Mr. Miles would have made himself conversant with the exchange position, especially having regard to the substantial benefit that he enjoys from it. He suggests the exchange should be brought back to normal. I wonder how he would fare if his suggestion were put into effect. Then he asks why the exchange on interest payments should not be used to subsidise the primary producer. What does he want, and what does he think is done with the exchange now paid on interest? Who pays the exchange that Mr. Miles gets when he sells his products overseas? Nobody but the Governments when remitting exchange payments, and importers when they pay for their imports. Mr. Miles ought to know that, because we in Western Australia export more per head than any other State, we derive a considerable benefit from the exchange. We export £37 per head, whereas the average for Australia is £16 per head. The figures showing the exchange earned by Western Australia should be an illumination to Mr. Miles. They are as follows:—

Year ended 30/6/1932.		
		£
Exports overseas as earned in exchange		3,078,882
The exports, however, included gold shipped by the Commonwealth Bank in excess of the gold produced by us, so that the exchange on the excess has to be deducted		206,463
		£2,872,419
	£	
Imports paid in exchange	748,750	
Exchange on interest payments amounted to ..	620,058	
		1,368,808
Therefore, the net gain to Western Australia as a result of the exchange was		£1,503,611

That is to say, in the last financial year we gained £1,500,000 through exchange, and Mr. Miles suggests that we should try to bring the exchange rate back to normal! I wonder what the wheat farmer and the pastoralist think of the suggestion!

On the subject of extension of pastoral leases, Mr. C. H. Wittenoom has unconsciously anticipated the intentions of the Government, who will introduce the necessary Bill during this session.

The Electoral Department has been made the subject of a technical criticism by Mr. Harris, and of a violent attack by Mr. Gray. Mr. Harris declares that the department allows the names of "squatters" on Crown lands to remain on the electoral roll, whereas Section 135 of the Land Act renders a "squatter" liable to a fine of £100 for trespass. The Crown Law Department, in 1916, advised that in view of this section of the Land Act a "squatter" could not be enrolled electorally as a householder. This legal opinion or ruling, however, was affected by the passage of the Road Districts Act of 1919, under which any person being in unauthorised occupation of any Crown land was to be deemed to be, for the purposes of the Roads Act, the owner of the land which he so occupied, or on which the habitation stood. These "squatters" were, accordingly, rated by road boards; and some of them, had they claimed electoral enrolment as rate payers, would have been properly enrolled. The remainder could not have been enrolled as ratepayers, because the rateable value was less than £17 per annum, although the houses they occupied were rentable at or over that amount. Upon the point being submitted to the present Crown Solicitor, he advised that the Electoral Department would be unlikely to succeed in any action if they raised objection to such enrolments. And that is how the matter stands at the present time. I have only to add that Mr. Harris has been in a position since May last to test the legality of the enrolments in question.

The attitude Mr. Gray takes towards the Electoral Department is of a different nature. I am keeping well within the bounds of fact and truth, and indeed of moderation, when I say the hon. member has made wildly reckless and utterly groundless charges against the Chief Electoral Officer. Mr. Gordon has the absolute confidence of the Government, who recognise that he does full justice to his difficult and sometimes delicate position, discharging the duties of his important office quite irrespective of persons. Mr. Gray's baseless allegations are of such a character, and were made in such a tone, as to justify me in asking the House to pardon a temporary departure from what I hope and believe I may describe as a habitual moderation of language. Mr. Gray's chief allegation is that the Electoral Department have sought to disfranchise persons entitled to vote at Legislative Council elections by rejecting declared qualifications attested by the hon. member himself and by

others associated with him. The departmental records are such as to throw light from several angles on applications for enrolment. Examination of the claims to which Mr. Gray alluded in his speech caused a number of them to be called seriously in question. As a result, and in the course of the department's routine procedure, communications were addressed to the claimants and others interested with a view to obtaining confirmation or refutation of the statements on the claim cards. The final result of these investigations has been to cause Mr. Gray to contend, and persist in contending, that at all times the department's aim is to keep or get people off the roll. He also maintains that the departmental interpretation of a voter's qualifications is not that which the Legislature intended. These, surely, are extraordinary and sweeping charges, and ought not to have been made without a conviction of their possessing a solid basis in fact.

The Electoral Department's general and, I submit, sufficient reply to these allegations is that the qualifications laid down have been referred to the Crown Law Department for interpretation, and that on this legal advice claims to enrolment are admitted or rejected. It is convenient at this point to notice Mr. Gray's non-contentious remarks as to the advisableness of adopting joint State and Federal rolls. This proposal is borne prominently in mind by the State Electoral Department, and has been for many years. It has not yet come to fruition because of the financial question involved.

The way is now clear for examining, and I trust refuting, the hon. member's charges in detail. To begin at the beginning, I shall read a letter written by Mr. Gray to the Chief Electoral Officer on the 16th April last:—

Further investigations by myself bear out my somewhat heated charges made by me on Saturday against your department.

1. Alfred Francis Cahill, 19 Wellington Street, Buckland Hill: The circumstances are—Living rent free (for reasons not necessary to mention) in uncle's home. Uncle is living in the home and is an old-age pensioner being cared for by Mr. Cahill's wife. He is really a boarder. Basis of claim for enrolment, on my personal advice, head of the household in a home with twice the qualification necessary for enrolment. My reasons for giving such advice: Instructions and authority given by Mr. Cooke in 1926 to myself, under which authority dozens of persons were enrolled.

In connection with this case my charge of a gross breach of faith by the department is upheld. The arrangement was for all problem cases on claims presented by me to be held back pending my explanation and then a decision given by the registrar, or alternatively further instructions made either by the department or myself. Proof of the statement is found in the action of the department in holding back a young lady's claim, which was received about the same time, living within a stone's throw of Cahill and filled in but not collected on the same day as Cahill's card. In the latter case the claim was twice pressed by me, refused by the registrar and the card destroyed by me in the Electoral Office.

2. Henry James McClymont, Forrest Street, Fremantle East: This card was signed in error, reported at my office, left in the bundle of cards by myself; taken out by me in Mr. Ewins' presence, should have been destroyed by me there but was inadvertently left on Mr. Ewins' table. The action by you in this case is a pure piece of official stupidity, also a breach of faith with me.

3. Archibald Nicol, Attfield Street, Fremantle: An error by claimant, reported to the person who witnessed the card (H. Hawkins). The latter reported at my office, but was overlooked by the staff.

I am given to understand that the police have in their possession five or six summonses for me to appear as witness against these unfortunate people. I am perfectly satisfied that in every case a genuine explanation of error can be given.

The action of your department in securing evidence against highly respected citizens by persuading them by letter or circular to commit themselves, which is definitely proved in Cahill's uncle's case, is a damnably, rotten, dishonourable, practice, which the average thug would not commit. I regret to make the statement that your department have broken a solemn and definite contract with me; that you lay yourselves open to a very serious charge, inasmuch as action could have been taken against Cahill two months ago, yet you stay your hand to the 14th day of April (nomination day) which in ordinary circumstances would be the commencement of my election campaign, when any police action against myself or against citizens who acted on my advice would have seriously imperilled my success at the polls, and rightly so if proved, because anyone convicted of deliberately and falsely packing an electoral roll is not fit to be a public representative. By the time the cases were finalised the election would have been over.

I cannot escape the impression, nor do I think the public will, that if the stupid, unjust prosecution of decent citizens is continued, the West Province prosecutions are only a smoke screen to cover bigger operations in the Metropolitan-Suburban Province to the detriment of one of the candidates.

I cannot imagine that it is possible for high public officials to be involved in such a scandal. The only other alternative that can be made is that the department and its officers are a comatose or petrified institution, deaf, blind and dumb to common sense interpretation of

the Constitution and regulations. I suggest that if this heresy hunt is to continue you will refrain from the unusual and repugnant practice you have been engaged in, in persuading decent people to convict themselves, and adopt the just methods used by respectable detectives and police, and provided for in the statutes. Do not further try to trap decent citizens.

I now suggest that you make representations to the Minister or the Crown Law Department to withdraw the summonses against Cahill, McClymont, and Nicol, and obtain the adjournment of the other cases for one month pending competent and independent investigations in the cases named. I also invite the department to take action against me personally for misrepresentation rather than against private citizens and canvassers, who were acting under my directions, while I was in turn acting under advice given by your department.

It is not pleasant for me to write in this strain, but I must make the protest on behalf of the people whom you are trying to drag in the gutter.

Hon. C. B. Williams: You could not have anything more honest than that, could you?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Merely glancing at various unusual terms and expressions used in the hon. member's letter, I go on to read Mr. Gordon's comments addressed to the Under Secretary for Law—

The attached letter has been received from the Hon. E. H. Gray, with reference to several instances in which summonses have been issued in the West Province.

With regard to (1) Cahill, Alfred Francis. If the law officers on the particulars furnished are of the opinion that the claimant is entitled to enrolment, then I suggest the summons should be withdrawn. (2) McClymont, Henry James. It is acknowledged by Mr. Gray that the card was signed in error. As to what happened when submitted to the registrar, that officer submits the following statement:—

"With reference to the Hon. E. H. Gray's statement concerning the claim card of McClymont: When dealing with some of the West Province cards I had occasion to put a number aside for investigation, and as Mr. Gray was responsible for the furnishing of these cards, they were on several occasions during his visits to the office shown to him, and in some instances at his request the cards were taken away by him. The case above-mentioned was, no doubt, one of those referred to him, but this card must have been left with me as I dealt with the claim."

(3) Nicol, Archibald: It is also acknowledged by Mr. Gray that the card was signed in error and overlooked when being forwarded to the Electoral Department.

The practice of the registrar for the province is to make a superficial examination of the cards as they are received and those which are deemed not to comply with the provisions of the Constitution and Electoral Acts are referred to those persons who lodge them, where they are known. Those which are prima facie correct are accepted and then have to be dealt with under the provisions of the Electoral Act. With the closing of a roll imminent a registrar cannot hold cards indefinitely, but has to decide whether they are to be accepted or rejected. In the instances in which action has been taken, the cards were received, but subsequent inquiries disclosed that the electors were not qualified and it would appear that breaches of the law had occurred.

The suggestion that prosecutions were deliberately withheld is disproved by the facts. I have consistently recommended that the provisions of the Electoral Act should be enforced.

As to any breach of faith, the registrars at all times endeavour to secure particulars which would place in order what might be doubtful claims. Electors, candidates and representatives of candidates, are constantly advised of the provisions of the Constitution and Electoral Acts regarding the qualifications of electors for enrolment, and every assistance is afforded to ensure, as far as is possible, that electors are properly enrolled.

Hon. C. B. Williams: No thanks at all to Mr. Gray for trying to get the rolls in order, when that is the duty of the registrar.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Requesting the House to judge Mr. Gray's letter in the light of the Chief Electoral Officer's reply, I now turn to the assertions concerning the Electoral Department and Mr. Gordon. First of all, as to the department's alleged discouraging of enrolment, here are some illuminating figures. At the last general Assembly elections for the State in April, 1930, the enrolments for all districts totalled 230,076, while the Commonwealth enrolments were ascertained at the same date to be 215,452. At the 30th June, 1931, the figures were: State 222,099, Commonwealth 213,990. At the close of 1931, when the Commonwealth elections were held, the figures were Commonwealth 222,616, State 221,277. Regarding the latter figures, it has to be remembered that immediately before any election there is a considerable addition to the rolls by electors who omitted to register at the proper time. This applies to both State and Commonwealth rolls. These figures are ample proof that there is not the discouragement alleged. Moreover, the law provides for a system of electors claiming enrolment, and not for the department's canvassing to enrol them.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Does the State pay its canvassers anything?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Enrolment not being compulsory acknowledgment cards are not sent to province electors or claim-

ants for enrolment. The cost to the State of adopting Mr. Gray's suggestion under this head, taking into account clerical assistance as well as postage, would be by no means inconsiderable. Next, as to confusion and obstruction by State electoral officers, alleged by the hon. member, if confusion did exist, which is denied.

Hon. C. B. Williams: It does exist.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: ——it was owing to the action of canvassers who had no knowledge of the Constitution Act, or else, having some knowledge, endeavoured to persuade unqualified persons to ignore the provisions of both the Constitution and Electoral Acts. The department do not obstruct the enrolment of any person who is duly qualified. Mr. Gray referred to the questionaire issued by the department when doubt exists as to qualifications of province electors. A perusal of the questionaire, a copy of which I will lay on the Table, shows that the language, described by the hon. member as "not understood," is plain and simple. Inquiries made by the registrar in many of the West Province cases dealt with elicited the fact that electors who were renting a room from the person who was primarily the tenant of the landlord, had claimed enrolment as "householders," and on the text of the replies received by the registrar to the questions asked, the prosecutions eventuated.

Hon. E. H. Gray: That is not true.

Hon. C. B. Williams: You would not expect it to be true.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is not competent, according to the legal advice tendered to the Electoral Department, for a person occupying a room without having control of the premises and paying rent immediately to the person holding the title or lease, to be enrolled on a "householder" qualification. Of course, the conditions are that the freeholder or leaseholder are non-resident, and the person who rents the house from him is the only person who can claim as "householder."

As to the unauthorised signing of claimants' names on claim cards, or, in plain English, the forging of claimants' signatures on cards, I have available reports obtained by the Electoral Department from the police indicating that such a practice does exist. These show that in one prosecution taken by the department the person concerned, who was fined by the Police Magistrate at Perth, admitted that when he had any difficulty in obtaining signatures of electors to claim cards he had signed between twenty and thirty cards; but he was not able to supply the department with the names of the persons for whom he signed. So far, the department have been able to find four cards which were illegally signed by this individual.

Hon. J. Cornell: An obliging gentleman.

Hon. C. B. Williams: How much did the Government pay him to say all that?

Hon. E. H. Gray: There were no cards in connection with my case.

The PRESIDENT: Order! When the Leader of the House is not speaking he does not make a point of interjecting when other members are speaking.

Hon. C. B. Williams: But he is reading.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I expect members to extend to the Minister the same courtesy that he extends to other hon. members when they are speaking.

Hon. C. B. Willliams: So long as he gives us commonsense.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Gray's speech suggests that the department are bound to accept without question all claim cards lodged with the registrars. Obviously, this cannot be done, as the department have to be satisfied as to the identity of the claimants and as to their qualifications. I have figures showing additions to the West Province roll during a period of six weeks prior to the closing of such roll for the recent biennial elections, and the number struck off as the result of inquiries by the department as to the status of electors since the date of the election referred to:—

Names added during period	1,473
Names struck off since election, for various reasons	446

Mention was made by the hon. member of electors who, being already enrolled, furnished cards. This is not at election times only; it is a matter of constant occurrence, but the new cards which are received are substituted for old cards which are in the index. It was noticed, during the course of the preparation of the rolls for the biennial election, that many electors, owing to representations by canvassers, had their respective qualifications altered from "freeholder" to "equitable freeholder" or "householder," the electors themselves having originally enrolled themselves for a good and proper

qualification. During Mr. Gray's speech several members interjected regarding the enrolment of "joint householders." Under Section 16 of the Constitution Act this is permitted, provided the total rent paid by each one of four persons annually is £17, clear of rates and taxes; but this rent must be paid direct to the non-resident owner or non-resident leaseholder.

Hon. C. B. Williams: What is the percentage of people who do that?

Hon. E. H. Gray: About 30 per cent.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have here a list of persons prosecuted by the Electoral Department, together with the claim cards from which the prosecutions arose, and some further information as to each case:—

List of Summonses Issued.

Witness to signatures in cases of Plummer, Cahill, and Ross—Hon. E. H. Gray.

Plummer, R. H.—Claimed as "householder," and owner of premises, Mrs. Blanche L. Tushington stated that Plummer rented neither the house nor rooms therein.

Cahill, A. F.—Claimed as "householder," and owner of premises, John Ridyard, stated that Cahill was living rent free.

Ross, Georgina.—Claimed as "householder," and owner of premises, Miss Jane Eardley, stated that "she (Georgina Ross) is my sister and we share and share alike. She does not own the house nor pay rent. She is an invalid."

On personal inquiry by an Electoral Officer Miss Georgina Ross stated she had never signed a card before a witness, and that being an invalid did not see anyone on the subject of her enrolment.

McClymont, Hy. Jas.—Claimed as "householder," and Mrs. Kate McDonald in reply to questions stated that she paid a weekly rent and that McClymont rented rooms from her.

Gibbons, P.—Claimed as "householder," and owner, Mrs. A. M. Exley, stated that Gibbons only rented rooms, paying 6s. per week.

Nicol, A.—Claimed as "householder," and owner, Blanche E. Powell, stated that Nicol neither rented house nor rooms. Mr. Nicol unknown.

Hon. E. H. Gray: He lived two doors up. That is the explanation. The magistrate knocked out each case.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There is a reason for that and you know it.

Hon. E. H. Gray: You tell the House the reason.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Here is a list of disallowed claims:—

Baker, Edward Norman.—On Province claim card being received it was compared with the Assembly card of the elector in the Electoral card index, and the signatures were so dissimilar that the police were requested to make inquiries. Police report attached. Compare the signatures obtained by the police with the one on the card witnessed by E. H. Gray and with the later Assembly card. Mrs. Baker in a statement to the police admitted she signed her husband's name to the Assembly card. The signatures of E. N. Baker on the Assembly cards (2), on the Province card and on the Police report are all unlike one another. There seems no doubt that the last dated card is the correct signature of the elector. On that he signed E. Baker and not E. N. Baker as appearing on the Province card and the Police report.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Why do you not give the House all the details?

The PRESIDENT: I must ask the hon. member to cease interjecting. If he does not cease, I shall regretfully have to take action, in which case the hon. member may be more sorry than I shall be.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The record continues—

Griffiths, Miss Caroline, 4 Coventry parade, North Fremantle.—Ives, Francis, claimed as "householder," but on inquiry Miss Griffiths stated that Ives rented one room and had the use of a kitchen. Ives' card witnessed by E. H. Gray. Claim objected to and names struck off.

Lacavar, T., 33 Suffolk Street.—Claimed as "freeholder," 33 Suffolk Street. On inquiry found he was not naturalised. Card witnessed by H. Hawkins. Name not entered on roll.

Merendini, Samuel, 21 Howard Street, Fremantle.—On inquiry claimant states he is not naturalised. (Claimed as "householder.") Card witnessed by H. Landihi.

Fenton, Mary, 11 White Street, North Fremantle.—Fenton, Margaret, 11 White Street, North Fremantle, claimed as "householder," but on inquiry Mrs. Mary Fenton states that Margaret Fenton does not rent house or rooms from her. Margaret Fenton's card witnessed by E. H. Gray. Claim objected to and name struck off.

Johnson, Charles, 5 Pearse Street, North Fremantle.—Claimed as "householder." On inquiry by police, only renting a room. Ann Glasson legal "householder." Card witnessed by E. H. Gray. Name objected to and struck off roll.

Hendry, John, 11 Crandon Street, South Fremantle.—Claimed as "householder." From inquiries it was found that he was only renting a room from a Mrs. Lee of 11 Crandon Street. Name objected to and struck off roll. Card witnessed by H. Hawkins.

Linton, Ruth Mary, 1 Sampson Street, Fremantle.—Claims as "householder." Inquiry proved that she was not living there; the householder being Robert O. Fawkes. Card witnessed by J. Granland. Struck off roll.

Baines, Rose Minnie 34 Douglas Street, Fremantle.—Claimed as "householder." On inquiry it was found that she had no interest

in same; she is an old-age pensioner, and is living with a man named Hubbard, who is the householder. Struck off roll.

Whittaker, Chas. F., 17 Douglas Street, Fremantle.—Claimed as "householder." Upon inquiry it was ascertained that Whittaker only rented a humpy from Mrs. Shaw, 17 Douglas Street, at a rental of 2s. 6d. per week. Struck off roll.

Metropolis, Eliza May, 165 Glyde Street, East Fremantle.—Claimed as "householder and jt. freeholder," 165 Glyde Street. As she married a Greek who is not naturalised she cannot claim enrolment. Card witnessed by E. Pingilly. Claim objected to under Section 46.

Townsin, Albert Wm. Geo., 82 South Street, Fremantle.—Claimed as "householder," 82 South Street. Thomas E. W. Turton legal householder. Card witnessed by L. Nock. Objected to and struck off roll.

Clare, Anton Albert.—Correct name should be Klauer, Anton A.

Coyner, William Herbert.—Correct name Poyner, William Herbert.

Howes, Arthur William.—Correct name Hawes, Arthur William.

Jons, Arthur.—Correct name Jones, Arthur.

Kelly, Phillip Alexander.—Name repeated on roll as Kelly, Alexander.

Lyon, Joseph.—Correct name Lyons, Joseph.

Matthews, Robert Henry.—Correct name Mathews, Robert Henry.

Patterson, John.—Correct name Paterson, John.

Worth, William Francis.—Correct name Wirth, William Francis.

Davies, Diana.—Address given 32 Battle Street, Buckland Hill. Upon inquiry no such number, not known in street. Card witnessed by E. H. Gray.

The Fremantle prosecutions were left by the Crown Law Department to be conducted by the police. It is not reasonable to expect that they should be au fait with the multifarious provisions of the Constitution and Electoral Acts. The results of the proceedings, therefore, caused no surprise. Mr. Gray's concern about the fees due to witnesses for the prosecution of the defendants for whom he is still concerned, shows for whom he is still more concerned, shows a far-reaching and all-embracing regard for his fellows. I am glad to relieve the hon. member's anxiety. Those fees were paid. Mention was made by Mr. Gray of the destruction by him of claim cards. Mr. Gordon assures me that personally he had no knowledge of this being done by the hon. member, and that the Fremantle Registrar emphatically denies having authorised either Mr. Gray or anyone else to destroy any claim cards whatever.

Hon. J. Cornell: It is against the law.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Of course it is. The Electoral Act provides that claim cards shall be dealt with in certain ways, and of these destruction is not one. When claim cards, handed in by Mr. Gray, stood in need of qualification or additional particulars, they were entrusted to him so that the further information desired could be obtained from the claimants. In no case do electoral officers, I am informed, destroy cards except during an interval between elections, and, in any case, only obsolete cards are destroyed. It is necessary to keep claim cards for reference until the general election eventuates.

The hon. member's statements conflict when, having described the department as endeavouring both to take on and to keep people off the roll, he declares that the department try to obtain the fullest information before rejecting claims. As to his allegations of inefficiency and laxity, the whole of his remarks on the subject of the Electoral Department show that there has been no laxity in the making of inquiries as to the names and qualifications of claimants for enrolment. The inquiries made by the police officials at the request of the Electoral Department were not resorted to until after the receipt of a letter from Mr. Gray to the Chief Electoral Officer. I quote an extract from that letter to show that the hon. member preferred inquiries by police officers to inquiries by electoral officers.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Too right! He is a good judge too.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The extract is as follows:—

> I suggest that if this heresy hunt is to continue you will refrain from the unusual and repugnant practice you have been engaged in, in persuading decent people to convict themselves, and adopt the just methods used by respectable detectives and police, and provided for in the Statutes. Do not further try to trap decent citizens.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Gray saw the Chief Electoral Officer, apparently with the object of having the summons, which had been issued, withdrawn; and Mr. Gordon told him that matters of that kind were for the departmental head. The final result was that the Attorney-General issued instructions for the matters to be dealt with

by Mr. Gordon, as Chief Electoral Officer, under the provisions of the Electoral Act. Regarding the administration of the Electoral Department, the Electoral Act places the responsibility for this on the Chief Electoral Officer, subject to Ministerial control. A statement in the hon. member's speech alleges that a person claiming enrolment on the Commonwealth roll receives an acknowledgment card, but that a person claiming enrolment for the State roll does not receive an acknowledgment. The hon. member is apparently come to the conclusion that as no acknowledgment cards are sent out to Province electors, the same applies regarding the State Assembly roll. It is now definitely stated that so far as the Assembly roll is concerned, all claim cards are acknowledged by State Registrars. As to the position of witnesses to claim cards, a witness is able to escape prosecution by making a statement that the person who signed the card represented himself to the witness as bearing a certain name and having a specified qualification. Canvassers who have been interrogated, have averred that they dealt with so many claims that they could not recollect the particular person who signed a particular card they witnessed. This is the situation when a question arises as to the authenticity of the claim.

To summarise the position, the complaint of the hon. member is that the Electoral Department instituted prosecutions in six instances against persons enrolled for the West Province. We are thus faced with an examination of the facts as they appear in the records of the department. The evidence against the electors is contained in the replies received by the registrar to certain questions asked by him, and that evidence was submitted to the Crown Law Officers, who advised that offences had been committed. The Chief Electoral Officer then recommended that summonses be issued in each of the six cases. The hon. member endeavoured to have some or all of those summonses withdrawn, and his non-success in that direction prompted him to write his letter of the 16th April last, addressed to Mr. Gordon. In that letter he admits that claim cards were lodged which were irregular, and claims that, on the explanation by him of how the irregularities occurred, the department should withdraw the summonses. The hon. member admits having destroyed signed claim cards. There are other cards now in the possession of the Electoral Department which demonstrate that no care could have been exercised in ascertaining the correct names or qualifications of electors. Apparently it was thought that so long as the cards were delivered by the hon. member, they had to be accepted by the department. It is evident that the canvassers obtained signatures to claim cards of anyone whom they could persuade to sign them, and then presented the cards to the Registrar in the hope that he would accept them. A number were rejected on their prima facie appearance, but others were accepted and enrolled, and those persons then became liable for their actions in making declarations, which were deemed false in a major particular. The resulting prosecutions were not begun without advice as to the value of the evidence held by the department.

Hon. E. H. Gray: That did not hold in the court.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member knows what happened in the court; I am well aware of what happened. It seems as though one cannot speak in this debate without alluding, however briefly and yet repetitiously, to that subject of Hope and of Despair—Public Finance. Or rather I ought to say, Despair and Hope. Despair, I agree with the great majority of Australian parliamentarians and private citizens, is the gladly-speeded parting guest, and Hope is joyfully welcomed. If a good man struggling valiantly with adversity is a sight pleasing to the gods, as the ancients held; if Heaven helps those who strive to help themselves; then, the efforts of Western Australians to reconquer their accustomed state of general well-being should not go unaided. Certainly we have solid and abundant grounds for throwing pessimism to the winds. Under severely adverse conditions, Western Australia has worked wonders, especially in primary production. During the prosperous year 1930, this State exported £17,000,000 worth of commodities and imported £18,000,000 worth, the twelve months closing with an adverse balance of £1,000,000. Last year the State exported a total value of £16,000,000—price collapses notwithstanding—and imported only £10,000,000 worth, thus achieving a net surplus of nearly £6,000,000. Surely these are eloquent figures! If money talks, they speak

trumpet-tongued of recovery, of convalescence. Hon. members are saturated with figures already. I rest my case for cautious optimism on these. The rough and stony path that this community has trodden for two or three years, is growing smoother and easier. Let us press on! Let us but persevere and this, our desert march, will, soon rather than late, lead us back to our lost Eden.

We are heavily burdened with disabilities consequent upon Federation. Now, there is the Disabilities Grant. This year the Western Australian Government submitted a case —an unanswerable case, we hold—for a grant of £1,000,000 in respect of the disadvantages suffered by Western Australia under Federation. The Commonwealth has conceded £500,000—half of what we very properly and justly claimed—but still £200,000 greater than the grant of recent years. Decidedly, half a loaf is better than three-tenths. One star that gleams with intensifying brightness through the night of depression is the gold industry. Good news keeps on coming in from district after district. Our gold industry, far from petering out, gives promise of long life. Naturally, that industry brings to mind the gold bonus; and that originally small, now diminished, and seemingly about-to-vanish, bunch of carrots fatally suggests Federation. One feels inclined to ask, "Can any good come out of Federation?" I mean, for Western Australia. In this luckless affair of Federation, we Western Australians are the victims of a granted prayer. We asked for Federation, or a majority of us did; and all of us have got it. Now nearly all of us are Federation-sick. The West has long experienced, and experiences now, a bankruptcy of the Federal sentiment. The West —if I may be pardoned this comparison— feels all the disillusion of a beautiful heiress entrapped into marriage by a coldly selfish spendthrift.

For my part, I visualise Melbourne as the sordid, squandering husband. During my visits to that truly marvellous city, I have been made heart-sick by the thought of how much Western Australia has done to build up and maintain that pretentious, Bumble-minded, overgrown village, and how very little, even in the way of mere politeness, Western Australia has got for doing it. The middle-aged among us have no difficulty in recalling those nineties during which Victoria's capital existed, survived, eluded starvation, largely on outdoor relief dispensed to the "Queen City of the South" from Western Australian goldfields by fugitive Melbournians. Bank remittances and post office money orders told the tale of Western wealth and Eastern want. But for Patrick Hannan and other hardy, enduring prospectors of his calibre, a large portion of Melbourne would have been deserted permanently in those years that the East found so lean, and by now would have crumbled into dusty ruins. It used then to be said that when the mail steamer from Fremantle arrived, Melbourne ate. Canberra may be dismissed as a mere sorry white elephant—

Hon. Sir Charles Nathan: Question!

The CHIEF SECRETARY:—but Melbourne is a ravening tiger whom the West has fed, feeds, and shall feed with choice mutton chops.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: Is this the Dominions League?

Hon. A. M. Clydesdale: The Minister is a secessionist, then?

Hon. G. W. Miles: There will be another convert.

Hon. A. M. Clydesdale: It will not be you.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Well may we say, "How long, Oh Lord, how long?" "One people, one flag"—yes, but two land taxes, two income taxes! Federation's motto seems to be: Two of everything where one is ample. To Western Australia, Feedration is an incurable disease that, like lumbago, tortures but does not kill. And what of the "one destiny"? For Eastern Australia, the shelter of the tariff; for the West, competition against the world. Largely, Western Australians try to forget that everlasting Commonwealth in between tax demands and tariff increases and those Federal follies which would be laughable were they not so costly. But henceforth Western Australians must train themselves to remember Federation always—to see it steadily, and as an unpleasing whole. Not without reason might we of the West exclaim, "Away with Federation; cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?"

Hon. L. B. Bolton: The Referendum Bill will go through next time.

Hon. A. M. Clydesdale: That is a certainty.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: However, Federation's "to be or not to be" is too vast an issue to raise at the end of a speech that,

I fear, is over-long already. I thank the House for an indulgent hearing.

Question put and passed; the Address-in-reply adopted.

BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

1, Dairy Cattle Improvement Act Amendment.

2, Closed Roads Alienation.

3, East Perth Cemeteries.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

BILL—PEARLING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East) [7.45] in moving the second reading said: The Bill seeks to amend the provisions of the Pearling Act, its purpose being to extend to the Governor in Council, or to the Minister certain powers by virtue of which a greater control may be exercised over the production of pearl shall in North-West waters. Originally, it was considered that this end could be achieved by granting power to the Minister to endorse ship's divers and divers' tenders' licenses, and thus to restrict the operations under such licenses to specified pearl shell areas, or portions of specified pearl shell areas. Owing to world-wide depression mother of pearl shell is not being consumed at a rate equivalent to its production and stocks already on hand—particularly in New York—are greatly in excess of the demand, this notwithstanding the fact that strenuous advertising efforts to try to popularise the use of mother-of-pearl shell have been carried out by various interested parties. The position in the industry is, however, becoming more acute, and it is considered essential that even wider powers be granted. These extend to the restriction of pearling ship licenses and to the limitation of the amount of pearl shell which may be fished by pearlers. For the year 1931, the majority of Broome pearlers, co-operating with those of Thursday Island, agreed to restrict their output, each centre to produce 350 tons (a total of 700 tons) under contract to Gerdau & Co. of New York. For the current year, the agreed quota, under contract to the same firm, is 400 tons each for Broome and Thursday Island, a total of 800 tons. In addition, Darwin pearlers are permitted to fish a maximum of 225 tons. Pearling at Darwin is controlled by the Minister for Home Affairs under a Northern Australian Ordinance, No. 19 of 1930. Originally, the quota fixed for 1932 was 175 tons, but representations having been made, it was increased by 50 tons to a total of 225 tons, although in view of the unsaleable stocks and the danger of a market collapse, the Minister was reluctant to do so. The price of Broome quality shell under this contract is £180 per ton, packed at Broome. All the Broome pearlers are not fishing under contract to the Gerdau Company, nor are they all agreed upon the necessity for voluntary curtailment of the output. Of the 89 licensed pearling ships fishing out of Broome, 71 are controlled by persons fishing under contract, and 18 are controlled by persons outside the contract. Up to the end of August last the Broome fleet had fished and landed 363 tons of shell. Of this 288 tons were produced by ships controlled by pearlers under contract, and the balance of 75 tons by pearlers outside the contract. Under favourable working weather, the 400 tons quota is certain to be fished by the end of this month, or practically two months before the close of the season. It is important to bear in mind that, while the quota for Broome is 400 tons, it does not necessarily follow that the pearlers in the contract will receive payment for that amount. The weight of shell produced by those outside the contract is taken into consideration, and unless the contractor is prepared to purchase all shell over 400 tons, those in the contract will receive payment for 400 tons less the weight fished by those outside it. A second very serious consideration is that at either Thursday Island or Darwin a much greater quantity of shell than 400 tons and 225 tons respectively, could be fished during a season were the pearlers of either centre to break away from the undertaking, or should conditions which are being referred to as an "open go" eventuate. Should they eventuate, our North-West industry will, in the opinion of those in a position to judge, be the principal sufferer, hence the anxiety of the Broome Pearlers' Association for legislation which will enable the Government to control production, place all pearlers upon an equal footing in regard to output, and assist the Pearlers' Associa-

tion in their negotiations with the master pearlers at other pearling ports. Outside of Broome there are three pearling ports on our North-West Coast, namely, Port Hedland, Cossack, and Onslow. For the current year the number of ship (pearling) licenses issued at those ports is respectively 2, 4 and 3. During 1931, the figures were: Port Hedland 3, Cossack 3, and Onslow nil. The Broome total for 1931 was 81 working vessels, whilst for the current year it is 89.

Pearling vessels from Port Hedland, Cossack and Onslow usually operate in waters within reasonable distance of their home port, and at times Broome boats visit those waters. During 1931, about 17 of the Broome boats worked there, and the takes of shell were, on an average, about two tons more than those of the boats working in King Sound—Condon grounds. Ships' (pearling) licenses are annual, and expire on 31st December in each year. Divers and divers' tenders' licenses are (Section 17) issued during certain "terms." "Term" means the period from 1st January to 30th April, or from 1st May to 31st August, or from 1st September to 31st December in each year. Under Section 45 portions of pearl shell areas may be closed to pearling by Proclamation, but if areas were so closed the cost of effective supervision would be heavy. Under Section 16 of the existing Act, the grant, transfer or renewal of "ship" licenses is discretionary and subject to Ministerial control, an appeal to the Minister being allowed in the event of a licensing officer refusing to grant a license. The amendment is designed to even more effectively control the issue of these licenses, inasmuch as it is proposed that by a Notice in the "Government Gazette" the Governor may limit the grant of licenses to a certain number.

The proposed amendment to Section 45 is designed to limit the weight of shell which may be fished from any specified pearl-shell area or areas. As all pearling vessels now employed are hand-pump boats, a good average take for a season would be six tons. If, for instance, a maximum of six tons were fished, the pearler with one boat would be permitted to fish that weight, whilst the two-boat man would be permitted to fish 12 tons, and so on. By this means all pearlers would be placed on an equal footing in respect of the total weight to be fished during a season. The proposed regulations are designed for the immediate purpose of protecting and assisting the persons engaged in the pearl fishing industry, during a time of world-wide depression and stagnant markets, and it is considered that if we can limit the output to the amount that the markets can absorb it will benefit not only the personnel employed in the industry but the State as well. Those associated with the pearl fishing industry, proclaim, in no uncertain language, that, unless there is efficient control of the quantity of shell fished, there will be a collapse of the market which will mean the ruination of one of the State's most successful industries. Hon. member will thus realise how very necessary it is to give the wide and extraordinary powers asked for in these amendments. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. G. W. Miles, debate adjourned.

BILL—CATTLE TRESPASS, FENCING, AND IMPOUNDING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East) [7.55] in moving the second reading said: The main object of this Bill for an Act to amend Sections 30 and 34 of the Cattle Trespass, Fencing and Impounding Act, 1882, is to define more particularly what constitutes a sufficient fence. The consolidation Act which was assented to on the 21st September, 1882, has never been amended. From time to time over a period of years the Local Authorities, both road boards and municipal councils, have asked for the amendments now provided for in this Bill. Clause 2 amends Section 30 of the original Act which reads as follows:—

> The term "sufficient fence" shall be construed to mean any substantial fence reasonably deemed sufficient to resist the trespass of great and small stock, including sheep but not including goats and pigs. In every case where any dispute on the hearing of a complaint or on the trial of an action shall arise as to the sufficiency of any fence, the question shall be settled by the Justice or the Court hearing the same.

Difficulties have from time to time arisen in regard to what is or is not a sufficient fence and this Bill more specifically des-

cribes what a substantial fence is. Clause 3 amends subsection 4 of Section 34 of the principal Act. General complaint by local authorities is that on occasions animals are impounded and that the Act requires that such animals shall be supplied with sufficient wholesome food and water until such time as they are sold or, alternatively, claimed by the owner who is then required to pay the necessary fees. Before an impounded animal can be sold the Act requires that the sale shall be advertised, but there is this proviso, namely, that if an animal is impounded by a police constable then a justice of peace may if he considers that by the application of the provisions of the Act expense would be involved in excess of the amount that it would cost to keep the animals for the required space of time, then such Justice of Peace may order the sale of such cattle at such time and in such manner and under such conditions as he shall think fit. The Bill provides that the words "a police constable" shall be deleted and the words "any person" substituted, such for instance as a poundkeeper, or maybe the person who was responsible for the impounding of the trespassing animals. Local authorities in country districts in particular complain that many of the animals that are impounded are straying only because the owner himself places no value upon them and in many instances it is almost impossible to trace ownership when the sale time comes, as no constable has in the meantime made representations to a magistrate, the price realised is so small that the local authority is out of pocket and that is why the Bill goes on to provide, subject to certain conditions, that the animals unsold may be destroyed or disposed of in any way thought fit by a Justice. The Bill meets the requirements of the Road Board Association. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—STATE TRADING CONCERNS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East) [8.2] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of this Bill is to provide for the discontinuance of Government Ferries as a State Trading Concern. This concern being a transport facility, it has been decided to place it with the Commissioner of Railways, who already has the railways and tramways under his control, and thus bring the three Government transport facilities under the one head. For the past two years the Commissioner has administered the ferries under the State Trading Concerns Act. The Act has been found to be totally unsuited to the purpose. It has become necessary, therefore, to provide a suitable Act by which the Commissioner shall be guided. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—GOVERNMENT FERRIES.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East) [8.4] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is to provide for maintenance and working of Government Ferries. It provides for the handing over of the ferries, together with the assets and capital cost, to the Commissioner of Railways, who will be charged with the working of the ferries. The Commissioner of Railways has been administering the ferries for the past two years. When taken over, the boats were found to be in a bad state of repair, and considerable expenditure was necessary during the first twelve months to make them river-worthy. It will be seen from the Commissioner's annual report that in 1931 results showed a loss of £2,219. For the year 1932, however, the working profit was £195, notwithstanding the fact that earnings had decreased by £602. The Bill now before the House is similar to the Tramways Act, and covers the whole working of the ferries. The capital cost as shown in the books will be transferred to the Commissioner, who will have to find interest on it and also provide adequately, from revenue, for depreciation of the asset, in addition to keeping up to standard the boats and jetties taken over. The methods of keeping accounts will be those now in operation in the Railways and Tramways. Annual estimates will be submitted to Parliament in respect of the expenditure to be allotted each year; and, generally speaking, the Bill provides for the

same method of procedure as is adopted in working of the tramways. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. W. H. Kitson, debate adjourned.

BILL—INSPECTION OF MACHINERY ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East) [8.4] in moving the second reading said: This Bill seeks to amend the Machinery Act, 1921, in certain particulars, because during the last few years electric power has been applied to winding engines. As this was apparently not contemplated during the drafting of the Act or its passage through Parliament, provision was not made for persons driving such machinery to be qualified and properly certificated, as in the case of steam winding engines. It is now intended to clarify the position by making provision for all drivers of winding engines, except the small sizes already exempted by the mining and machinery Acts, to be properly certificated. In the first place, Section 2 has to be amended to include definitions of "Electric winding engine" and "steam winding engine." Section 53 must be amended to include electric winding engines as requiring to be under certificated control. Then it becomes necessary to amend other sections incidentally. For instance, provision has to be made in Section 54 for an additional certificate to be issued by the board of examiners, viz., "Electric winding engine-drivers' certificate"; and in Section 56 the powers of the holders of such certificates must be laid down. Further, the rights of steam winding engine drivers who have been driving electric winding engines six months prior to the passing of the amending Bill are to be protected.

A few necessary minor adjustments have also been made. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. H. Seddon, debate adjourned.

BILL—SPECIAL LICENSE (WAROONA IRRIGATION DISTRICT).

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East) [8.9] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of this Bill is to enable a special license to be granted in the Waroona Irrigation District under the Rights in Water and Irrigation Act, 1914. Early in 1932 Nestles and Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Company (Australasia) Limited, incorporated in New South Wales, approached the Government in connection with a proposal by the company to erect a factory at Waroona and establish a branch of their business in this State. The company sought to acquire land at Waroona, adjacent to the Drakesbrook main irrigation drain, from which they desired to draw the necessary water supply. Before the proposal could be put into effect, it was necessary that the company should have available a sufficient supply of water for use in their factory, and should be assured of such a water supply for such length of time as would justify them in expending the capital necessary to erect a factory and establish a branch here. The proposed site of the factory and the Drakesbrook main drain are situated in the Waroona Irrigation District, constituted under the Rights in Water and Irrigation Act, 1914, which is at present administered by the Minister as the Irrigation Board, and the taking of water from this drain is governed by the provisions of the Act. The measure mainly provides for the supply of water for irrigation and stock watering purposes, although Subsection 2 of Section 42 makes provision for granting a supply of water for a special purpose not expressly mentioned in the Act, provided that that purpose is approved by the Governor and the water is supplied on terms and conditions prescribed, but that any such license under that Act is limited to a term of 10 years. The grant of a license under that section was not entirely satisfactory to the company, as it could not assure to them a certainty of a permanent supply of water beyond 10 years, and without such an assurance the company were averse from going on with their proposal. The company assured the Government that 90 per cent. of the water drawn from the drain would be returned to the drain after use and would then be in good condition for irrigation and stock watering purposes, and approached the Premier upon the matter of the Government introducing legislation which would make it possible for the company to acquire a license for taking water permanently for a length of time which would justify them in establishing a branch of their business in

Western Australia. The Government held that it would be of considerable direct benefit to the State if the company carried out their proposal, for the reason that additional capital would be introduced into the State, would provide additional employment, would give a much needed impetus to the dairying industry and would keep in this State a lot of money that would otherwise be sent to the Eastern States for the purchase of the commodities the company proposed to manufacture here. The Government therefore felt bound, as far as they were able, to provide that continuity of water supply which the company desired. It was therefore arranged for the Minister to grant to the company a license to take water under Section 42 of the existing Act, pending the introduction of a Bill to authorise the Minister to grant to the company a permanent license, and the Premier promised to introduce the necessary Bill. The company have now erected a factory at Waroona, and are ready to commence operations. The Bill deals only with the granting of a license to the particular company, and Clause 3 authorises the Minister to grant to them a license for 99 years to take water from the Drakesbrook main drain for use in their factory. Such a license must be in the form of the agreement contained in the Second Schedule to the Bill, but may include further special considerations deemed necessary, the Minister to have power to determine the daily and hourly rate at which water may be taken, and to fix the fees and charges to be paid by the company. The form of agreement in the Second Schedule to the Bill contains certain express conditions which must be included in the license, the main condition being that the company must return as much as practicable of the water taken, and in such condition that the water will be fit for use for irrigation purposes and for the watering of stock. Other provisions have for their object the protection and preservation of the rights, powers, and immunities of the Minister under the Rights in Water and Irrigation Act, 1914, whilst still keeping the company bound by the provisions of that Act. The Bill and the license authorised thereunder will not in any way affect or prejudice the supply of water for irrigation purposes, because the license will be granted subject to the water supply being maintained by the return of water after use by the company. This State has been penalised in past years through not having factories to utilise local products, and it behoves the Government to encourage the establishment of such factories whenever possible, for in doing so it will bestow far-reaching benefits by providing additional employment, circulating more money, utilising what would, perhaps, be surplus products, and generally help in building up the economic prosperity of this State. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. W. H. Kitson, debate adjourned.

BILL—MAIN ROADS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East) [8.15] in moving the second reading said: I think it desirable to give members a brief outline of the principal Act and subsequent amendments in so far as they relate to the specific matters dealt with in the Bill now before the House. The principal Act was assented to on 31st December, 1925, and proclaimed as from 7th June, 1926. It constituted a board of three members. The activities of the board were directed principally to the construction and reconstruction of roads encompassed by the agreement between the Commonwealth and State Governments under the Federal Roads Act. The board was also charged with the duty of apportioning one half of the amount expended by it on permanent works and maintenance of main roads between the various districts benefited. Upon the declaration of roads as "main roads" the board became responsible for their maintenance, but was empowered to recover half the cost from the local authorities benefiting. Developmental roads were also constructed by the board, but the local authorities became responsible for the maintenance of such roads. The Main Roads Trust Account was credited with all revenue received from the imposition of a tax on the sales of motor spirit. It was ruled later that the State could not levy such a tax, and this source of revenue therefore ceased.

In 1929 a Bill was introduced, chiefly to amend the financial section of the principal Act in relation to contributions by the local

authorities, as a practical system for the administration of the principal Act to the satisfaction of the parties concerned could not be devised. As a result of discussions with the Local Governing Bodies' Association the proposal submitted in the Bill was that in lieu of levying according to the benefit derived by each local authority, 25 per cent. of the traffic fees collected should be paid into a trust account, and that the money so obtained should be used to meet the whole of the obligations of the local authorities in respect of main roads. Under this arrangement the main roads became the responsibility of the Main Roads Board. The Bill was referred to a select committee of the Assembly, which recommended a sliding scale ranging from 10 per cent. to 22½ per cent. in lieu of a fixed rate of 25 per cent., and this recommendation was adopted as from 1st July, 1929, and is in force to-day. The amending Act was assented to on the 23rd of December, 1929. The liabilities of the local authorities under the old arrangement for the year 1926-1927 were waived, but amounts due in respect of the years 1927-1928 and 1928-1929 remained as a debt due to the Main Roads Board. Section 9 of the amending Act provided that moneys received under this arrangement should be applied to:—(a) The payment of interest and sinking fund on one half of the State's expenditure on main roads; (b) the half cost of the maintenance of main roads. The 1929 amendment Act also provided that 22½ per cent., the net balance of the metropolitan traffic fees pool as prescribed in "The Traffic Act," should be appropriated to the purposes of the Main Roads Act. A further amending Bill was introduced during the 1930 session, principally for the purpose of abolishing the Main Roads Board and appointing in lieu thereof a commissioner, and for the waiving of the liabilities of the local authorities for the years 1927-1928 and 1928-1929, amounting to £32,000. The restrictions contained in Section 9 of the 1929 amending Act were repealed, allowing the commissioner wider discretion, but it was expressly prescribed that the percentage of traffic fees contributed by the local authorities should be expended only on the maintenance of main roads.

The Federal Aid Roads Agreement Act of 1926 had, and still has a very important bearing on our road-making activities Some of the regulations in the original Act were found to be irksome, so it was suggested at a meeting of the Federal Aid Roads Board held in Canberra in December, 1929, that an amendment of the Act was desirable. At a subsequent meeting in the following February it was decided to introduce legislation to amend it, because at that time the inability of the States to contribute their 15s. to each £1 provided by the Federal Government was becoming more and more apparent. The principal provisions of the amending Act were:—1, The contribution by the Commonwealth to the States shall be that amount which is collected by the Commonwealth by a tax of 2½d. per gallon on motor spirits imported, and 1½d. per gallon on motor spirits under excise tariff. (Under the principal Act certain specific amounts were payable annually to the States.) 2, The contribution to the States will be made on the basis as embodied in the original agreement, viz., three-fifths population, two-fifths area. 3, Sinking fund contributions at the rate of 3 per cent. per annum will be made during 5½ years; thereafter the rate shall be 2½ per cent. and shall be continued until the debt is redeemed. 4. Moneys paid to the State to be expended on construction, reconstruction, or maintenance of roads. It is to be noted here that maintenance of roads is now provided for, which was not the case under the original agreement. 5. Cancellation of the 15s. contribution by the States. The payment of moneys made to the State by the Commonwealth under the Federal Aid Roads Agreement will cease on the 31st December, 1936. Under the original agreement we received £384,000 per annum to which we had to add £288,000 per annum.

The Federal Act provides for the construction, reconstruction and maintenance of roads—that is, any roads without reference as to main, developmental or otherwise. The amending Bill seeks to bring the State Act into line with the Federal Act in this regard.

The monies now being received will average about £320,000 per annum, and as the amendment of the Federal Aid Roads Agreement now allows such funds to be applied to maintenance, construction, and reconstruction, instead of only construction

as previously, it is considered this amount is sufficient for the State to expend annually on roads during the present financial depression. It is also considered that whilst the State is in receipt of this money from the Commonwealth Government, the local authorities should be relieved of their financial obligations under the Main Roads Act, as owing to the depression all local bodies are experiencing great difficulty in financing purely domestic requirements, and it is proposed to amend the Act accordingly. The position, of course, will have to be reviewed at the expiration of the Federal Aid Roads Agreement. It is proposed that the local authorities should get this relief in regard to contributions which would have been payable from 1st July, 1932. But it is not proposed to cancel any debts owing by them at the 30th June, 1932. The amounts received from country local governing bodies by the Commissioner of Main Roads since the 1st July, 1929, the date from which the 1929 amendment Act operated, are as follows—

	£
1929-1930	4,386
1930-1931	33,413
1931-1932	27,273
Total	£65,072

The existing Act does not give power to expend any moneys on roads which have not been declared as main or developmental roads. Cases have occurred where it is desirable and necessary to carry out such work, and it is considered that power should be given in order to avoid making the otherwise necessary declarations. A case in point is the Mandurah bridge. The local authority was unable to find sufficient money out of its own revenue to repair the bridge, and because it had not been declared a developmental road the Main Roads Board had not power under the Act to spend the money on it. As it was a vital necessity that the bridge should be repaired, the Main Roads Board stretched a point and repaired it. Some of the local authorities have recently been made grants which, legally, should have been expended on the construction of developmental roads, but some of the money has been expended on maintenance. It is necessary therefore to validate the payments in so far as they apply to maintenance, and provision is so embodied in the Bill. The Traffic Act provides only for taking money out of traffic fees for the maintenance of main roads in the metropolitan area, and contains no provision for the construction of roads and bridges. Provision is also made in the Bill to appropriate the 22½ per cent. contributed by the metropolitan traffic pool last year, and also all future moneys received from that source, to the purpose of effecting improvements or providing additional facilities to main roads within the metropolitan area, all such work to be approved by the Governor on the recommendation of the Commissioner. There are many ways in which such money can be advantageously used, such as widening the Causeway, providing additional bridges over the river and by generally improving the main traffic routes in the metropolitan area. In view of the present financial depression which has caused such a shrinkage in the revenues of all Governments and governing bodies, it is necessary to cut our coat according to the cloth we have, and in this respect I consider the amendments provided in the Bill are both reasonable and necessary. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. W. H. Kitson, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.27 p.m.