

Legislative Council,

Friday, 16th March, 1917.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 3 p.m. and read prayers.

QUESTION—ENEMY SUBJECTS.

Hon. J. CORNELL asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Are any records kept by the Mines Department which set out the number of persons who are not naturalised, together with their nationality, employed in, on, or about the various metalliferous mines in this State? If so—(a) How many persons, not naturalised, subjects of the following countries:—Germany, Austria-Hungary, including its various slavonic dependencies, and Bulgaria, were employed in, on, or about the gold mines situated in the Westonia, Yilgarn, Dundas, East Coolgardie, and North Coolgardie mining districts on August, 1914? (b) How many were employed on the 1st February, 1917? 2, If no such records are available, will the Government instruct the Mines Department to prepare such a return without undue delay, and cause it, when available, to be placed on the Table of this House?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, No. 2, Enquiries will be made, and the result placed on the table of the House.

QUESTION — INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE BOARD, LOANS.

Hon. J. A. GREIG asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Is it a fact that the Industries Assistance Board has refused to accept

repayment of loans from clients? 2, If so, what was the reason for refusing to grant clients a clearance?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, No. The Board is desirous of reducing as far as possible the number of assisted settlers, and a clearance is given in every case, where the proceeds are sufficient to satisfy the Board's claim and those of outside creditors. 2, Answered by No. 1.

BILL — INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT AMENDMENT.

Message received from the Assembly notifying that the amendments made by the Council had been agreed to.

BILL — AGRICULTURAL BANK ACT AMENDMENT.

Message received from the Assembly notifying that the amendment made by the Council had been agreed to.

BILL—LAND AND INCOME TAX ASSESSMENT ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

Bill read a third time and *passed*.

BILL—TREASURY BONDS DEFICIENCY.

Report of Committee adopted.

Read a third time and *passed*.

BILL—FIRE BRIGADES.

Assembly's Message.

Message received from the Assembly notifying that the amendment requested by the Council had been made.

In Committee, etcetera.

Resumed from the previous day. Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair, the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported, and the report adopted.

Read a third time and *passed*.

BILL—LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [3.13] in moving the second reading said: In submitting this measure to members I should feel it my duty to apologise for asking members to deal with it at this late hour of the session if I was not satisfied in my mind that it would be useless to make such an apology. If hon. members are not satisfied that there is great need for the introduction of this important Bill, then no apology on my part would be of avail. If they are satisfied, and I think most of them will be satisfied, that it is necessary that this Bill should be passed, all I can do is to appeal to them to apply themselves to its consideration with a view of making it the best Bill possible in such time as they feel disposed to devote to it. It is true that the Bill has been introduced late in the session, but I need not go over the whole ground again and explain the reasons that have made this session such a broken one, and although unduly protracted there has been really much less time than usual for the consideration of public business. So far as this particular Bill is concerned, I know that in some respects matters contained in it have occupied the attention of the officers of the department during the administration of our predecessors. It has occupied the very close attention of the present Minister for Lands and his officers, and from time to time that of the Cabinet, ever since the Government were appointed. If it is introduced late in the session, I can assure hon. members that it has not been introduced without close consideration on the part of those responsible. I do not intend to dilate upon the general principles of the Bill. Its object is merely to facilitate the development of the lands of this State, and whatever opinion anyone may hold as to the wisdom or unwisdom of certain things which have been done in the past in the matter of settling people on the land, I think there can be no two opinions on this one great fact, that not only Western Australia, but Australia as a whole—except in a State like this where we have a great mining industry—depends almost entirely on the products of the soil and its wheat, wool,

and meat, and that fact has been brought home to us very prominently during the last year or two. Any Bill which aims at improving the conditions of those engaged in any industry in order that it may produce more wealth will have the careful consideration of this House, I am sure, and the one design of this Bill is to improve the condition of the agricultural and pastoral settler in order that more speedy development of our lands and greater increased production of wealth may be brought about. Before proceeding to deal with the different clauses of the Bill, I would like to draw the attention of hon. members to a document which has been circulated amongst them entitled "Sections of the Principal Act affected by the Land Act Amendment Bill, 1917." I think that all members have a copy of that document, and if they will permit me to do so, I think it would facilitate matters if I first asked them to glance through it for the purpose of making one or two alterations in the marginal notes to bring these notes into conformity with the Bill as it is now presented to them. These notes were compiled upon the Bill as originally introduced. Certain amendments which I will explain in detail have been made in another place, and the effect of these amendments as touching these particular notes is that they have altered the marginal notes giving the numbers of clauses of the Bill. If hon. members will follow me through these notes I will tell them exactly the alterations which have been made, and consequently there will be no occasion for confusion with any particular clause referred to in these notes, Clause 4 of the Bill is not the clause referred to in the notes. It is a new clause. Clause 4 in the notes consequently becomes Clause 5, and if hon. members will strike out the marginal figure 4 and put in the figure 5, it will save the possibility of confusion when I make reference to it later on. Similarly, No. 5 becomes No. 6, No. 6 becomes No. 7, No. 7 becomes No. 8, No. 8 becomes No. 9, No. 9 becomes No. 10, No. 10 becomes No. 11, No. 12 is a new clause which I will explain later, No. 11 becomes No. 13, No. 12 becomes No. 14, No. 15 is a new clause which I will explain later, No. 13 in the marginal notes becomes

No. 16, No. 14 becomes No. 17, No. 18 is a new clause, 15 becomes 19, 16 becomes 20, 17 becomes 21, 18 becomes No. 22, No. 19 becomes No. 23, No. 20 becomes No. 24 and No. 21 becomes No. 25. With these alterations made in these figures this explanatory page and the notes will I think be found of very great use. Clause 2 of the Bill amends Section 9. Section 9 of the Land Act, 1898, provides for the granting of other land in exchange for land resumed or the return of a proportionate part of the purchase money, but does not allow for any other method of compensation. When the Act was originally passed, this restriction in the matter of compensation gave rise to no trouble, because wherever the land might be resumed there was always plenty of land in the immediate locality with which a transfer could be made to the satisfaction of all parties. Now that settlement has become closer the position has frequently arisen when it is impossible to do justice to the settler under the provisions of the Act as it stands, particularly when it may be necessary to take for the purpose of a town-site a very considerable area out of a man's property. In order to avoid doing that injustice, the present limitation in the matter of granting compensation merely by the giving of other land, or the return of a proportionate part of the purchase money, has been extended, and now provision is made in the Bill that compensation can be paid, according to the discretion of the Minister. With regard to Clause 3, the idea is to enable conditional purchase holders of land, should the holder be adjudged a bankrupt or insolvent, to be sold either by auction or private contract. At present it can only be sold by auction and great difficulty often arises. Land having been once submitted to auction, it is thought desirable it should afterwards be competent to sell it by private contract if that could be suitably arranged.

Hon. A. Sanderson: Is that in regard to conditional purchase land?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes, the holder having become bankrupt or insolvent. It is very frequently the case not only with land, but with other things, that after being submitted to auction it is found comparatively easy to arrange a private sale,

but that cannot be done under the Act as it stands at present. Section 140 gives the mortgagee power to sell by auction or private contract, and the amendment of Section 271 is merely to bring this Act into conformity. Clause 4 is a new clause. Its object is to alter the number of divisions in the State from six as they are at present, to five. The alteration is brought about by amalgamating the eastern with the central division. Most hon. members will be familiar with the boundaries of these divisions. The eastern division is the one extending right to the eastern portion of the State. It goes down to the South away to somewhere near Eucla and to the North, a sort of no man's land. The central division comprises chiefly the goldfields areas. In the past these have been two distinct divisions, and in the central division the rental has been 10s. and in the eastern division 5s. It is considered that there is no reason for making this distinction and that a lot of the country in the central division is as a matter of fact of no greater value, and should not be charged a higher rate for than the land in the eastern division. The amendment, therefore, was put in in another place to combine these two divisions, the central and the eastern, so that the same conditions should apply to both as now apply to the eastern division. Clause 5 provides for enabling the lessee of town and suburban land to obtain the fee simple on performance of the prescribed improvements. Recently these town and suburban lands have been sold only under leasehold conditions, and it is the opinion of the Government that it will greatly stimulate enterprise and lead to the more rapid development of this class of land if the people holding it are given a freehold tenure. Clause 6 deals with Section 50 of the Principal Act, which provides for throwing open land for orchards, vineyards and gardens. The purpose is to reduce the minimum from £1 per acre to 10s. per acre in keeping with the reduction made in the Land Act Amendment Act, 1915. Clause 7 amends Section 64 of the Act. Section 64 of the Act allows that the holder of conditional purchase land under residence conditions may apply on payment of a fee of £1 to come under the non-residence conditions. It has been ruled that an application to be

relieved of residence accompanied by the prescribed fee cannot be refused. This has led to people taking advantage of this particular feature of the Act, particularly in cases where a number of rival applicants may have appeared before the Land Board, each of them desirous of being given a certain piece of land. Naturally the preference of the board inclines to the applicant who demonstrates to the board his intention to reside on the land. If he is able to show the board that he has a family and is going to settle down permanently, he gets the preference. It has happened that having secured this preference of the board by reason of his representation that he has a family and is going to reside on the land a settler has been granted the land under residence conditions, and having received it and paid his £1 has asked to be brought under non-residence conditions, and it has been held that he cannot be prevented from being granted this. The object of the amendment is to give the Minister discretionary powers as to whether an application for the right to transfer from residence conditions to non-residence conditions shall be granted or not, and I think that the amendment is a very desirable one. Let us turn to Clause 8. Section 5 of the Land Act Amendment Act, 1915, provides that cultivable land and grazing land may be comprised in the same conditional purchase lease, and if more than one half of the area is grazing land the land shall be granted under Part 6, that is the part dealing with the conditional purchase of grazing lands of the principal Act dealing with grazing leases. In putting this into practice it frequently occurs that a block is to be granted as grazing land under Part 6 of a considerably less area than the minimum of 300 acres provided in the Principal Act. All this amendment does is to make the minimum under Section 68, grazing lease, the same as under Section 55, conditional purchase, namely 100 acres. It is a consequential amendment following on the Land Act Amendment Act of 1915. Clause 9 of the Bill deals with Section 75 of the principal Act. Section 75 provides that a selector's interest in a homestead farm shall not be liable to be taken in execution under the provisions of Section 27 before the issue of the Crown grant. Section 27 deals with

the lands of an insolvent which are being sold for the benefit of his creditors. This protection has been abused by selectors by the simple expedient of refusing to apply for their Crown grant after the occupation certificate, which is for seven years, has expired. The amendment provides that this protection shall cease on the expiration of the occupation certificate, whether the Crown grant has been applied for or not. The amendment really does no more than carry out the original intention of Parliament, which was to protect the settler until he applies for his Crown grant; but it was never contemplated that after the occupation certificate had expired by lapse of time, at the end of seven years, the selector would refrain from applying for the Crown grant. The object of the amendment is that instead of protecting him indefinitely, as the Act now does until he applies for the Crown grant, he shall be protected until the expiration of the seven years, when the occupation certificate expires. That is in Clause 9. With regard to Clause 10, under the Act at present a Crown grant for a homestead farm cannot be obtained until the expiration of seven years from the date of the occupation certificate, except by the payment of 5s. per acre under Section 82. The present amendment provides for the obtaining of the Crown grant at any earlier time after the expiration of five years from the date of the certificate provided all the conditions have been fulfilled, thus bringing homestead farms into line with conditional purchase holdings in this respect. Clause 11 repeals the proviso to Section 82 of the principal Act that the Crown grant of a homestead farm which is portion of a surveyed block the balance of which is held by a selector under conditional purchase under Part V cannot be issued until the prescribed conditions of the conditional purchase have been fulfilled. That provision has been found to operate harshly in many cases. The following is an illustrative case: a selector holds a location under conditional purchase, and a homestead farm on which he wishes to obtain a loan or further loan, as the case may be, and when the matter is looked into it is found that the term of the homestead farm, seven years, has expired, but that the term of the

conditional purchase has not, and he cannot obtain the Crown grant of the homestead lease unless he has complied with the conditions and paid up the balance of the purchase money on the conditional purchase. The repeal of the proviso will get over this difficulty. Clause 12 is consequential on Clause 4, to which I have already referred in connection with the number of districts, owing to the amalgamation of the Eastern and Central Divisions. It provides for the elimination of the Central Division by repealing Section 94 of the principal Act. Clause 13 repeals Section 100 of the principal Act, which provides for a reduction of rent on pastoral leases in the Kimberley Division after stocking. Pastoral leases under this Act are required to be stocked within two years, failing which they are liable to forfeiture. Other provisions are being made in this Bill with regard to rent, with the result that this particular section is no longer required. Clause 14 repeals Section 101 of the principal Act, which provides for the stocking of pastoral leases after two years, and makes other provisions in lieu thereof. Under the repealed section lessees were required to stock within two years of the commencement of the lease or approval of the lease, at the rate of ten head of sheep or one head of large stock to each thousand acres. The new clause provides the same rate to start with, but at the end of five years the number shall be twenty head of sheep or four head of large stock; and at the end of seven years a further increase is provided for thirty head of sheep or six head of large stock for each thousand acres for the remainder of the term of the lease. Clause 15 is a new clause which was inserted as a result of the rejection by this House of the Kingia Grass Concession Bill. It was found that the principal Act, in Section 110, makes provision for the issue of licenses for the cutting of timber, and for a number of other things, but no provision for the granting of a license for the cutting of kingia grass. Clause 15 of this Bill provides that Section 110 of the principal Act is amended by inserting a subsection to stand as Subclause 5 (a), as follows:—

A grass tree license authorising the licensee to fell, cut and remove any grass

tree known as "Blackboy" or other "Kingia Grass" growing upon any Crown land in the locality named in such license.

And a further clause fixes the rent to be charged for such licenses. Clause 16: under the principal Act as it stands all conditional purchase leases are dated from the first day of the quarter preceding the date of approval of the application. This clause is merely inserted for the purpose of convenience in working, and because the existing Act has been found to be faulty. When an application is made for land, rent has to be lodged and if, as sometimes happens, there is unavoidable delay, this provision proves troublesome and necessitates a refund of the rent, when possibly the applicant has been in occupation of the land. The amendment is to give the Minister power in special cases to fix the date for the commencement of the lease at some other date, generally earlier, but cases have occurred where it would be found desirable to fix it at a later date. The penalty for late or non-payment under Section 136 of the principal Act relates only to rent, but it is considered desirable and necessary that the same provision should apply to other payments which from time to time are due to the department; and paragraph (b) of the subclause makes the provision. Paragraph (c) provides for the reduction of the rate of fines. The fines at present are at the rate of 10 per cent. per annum for the first month, 15 per cent. per annum for the second month, and 20 per cent. per annum for the third month. The alteration brings it down to 10 per cent. per annum for the whole period. Clause 17 makes additions to Section 161 of the principal Act, which deals with the making of regulations. The new provision in subclause 8 (a) is to regulate the procedure of district land boards and other inquiries under this Act, and subsection 11 (a) prescribes fees for the regulation of instruments, the amendments of instruments, the entry of transmissions, searches of the register and other matters. Clause 18 is the one I have referred to in connection with an earlier clause, 15, I think, making it competent for the Minister to grant licenses for the cutting of kingia grass and black-boy, and this clause fixes

the fee for such licenses at 5s. per man per month. Clause 20: Sections 71, 72 and 73 of the Land Act Amendment Act, 1906, dealt with special settlements and these provisions have been little used in the past. It is anticipated, however, that they will come into operation in connection with the settlement of returned soldiers. The Land Act Amendment Act, 1915, provides for land being granted under Part VI., where more than half the area is grazing lease, as I have already explained in connection with an earlier clause, and it is necessary to extend the special settlement conditions to Part VI., and it is also considered advisable to extend the provisions to Part IX., workingmen's blocks. Clause 21: Although Section 2 of the Land Act Amendment Act, 1915, reduced the minimum price of poison land to 2s.6d. per acre, it seems to be the general opinion that this minimum should be still further reduced to meet the case of land badly infested with poison or wadjil. It is a lengthy clause, but otherwise it is a copy of existing legislation and is for the purpose of reducing the minimum to 1s. per acre for poison lands. Provision is also made with regard to those cases in which a reduction of rent was made under the provisions of the Land Act Amendment Act, 1915. Sub-clause 2 provides that the maximum price of ordinary conditional purchase land, exclusive of improvements, shall not exceed 15s. per acre. This is in accordance with the promise given in the policy speech of the Premier some time ago. Sub-clause 3 provides that where the price of land has been reduced on account of poison the Crown grant shall not be issued until such poison has been eradicated to the satisfaction of the Minister. Similar provision is not made in respect of wadjil land, because it is considered that these lands are not worth spending money on. Clause 22 repeals the subsection of Section 3 of the Land Act Amendment Act, 1915, which has acted harshly in some cases, has been troublesome to the department, and which it is considered desirable to repeal. Hon. members will recollect that when the Land Act Amendment Act, 1915, was passed providing for reclassification, protests were raised in this Chamber and in another

place against the provisions by which the person whose land had been according to the reclassification, over-priced, could not get any advantage from the reduction until he had paid up the whole of his rents. From a practical point of view there has been a difficulty in working and from the point of view of the settlers it has worked a manifest injustice. The principle seems to be that if you charge a man too much for his land and by reason of his having paid too much, he gets into arrears with his rents, and when you make inquiry you find that the high price was one of the reasons he got into arrears, you then say to him, "I will not give you the benefit of the reduction you are entitled to until you pay up the arrears" which are probably the cause of all the complications. This clause contemplates the removal of that proviso. Clause 23 deals with the position of land distant from railway facilities. Section 4 of the Act of 1915, as it stands, makes no mention of railway stations or sidings. It refers simply to distance of land from a railway, and, as all hon. members know, a man may be within 12½ miles of a railway and still not be able to reach any point on that railway of the least value to him under a distance of 15 or 20 miles. The provision now is that the Minister shall have power in set cases to apply the provisions of this clause to lands situated beyond 12½ miles from a railway station or siding. Clause 24 is to facilitate the surrender and amalgamation of leases, particularly in respect of soldiers serving with the Australian Forces. Clause 25 provides for selectors being relieved of rent for the first five years of their leases, the amount payable being merely the interest on the cost of survey, or other improvements on the land. This also is carrying out the promise given in the Premier's policy speech. Clause 26 I think fully explains itself. It is only reasonable that soldiers who have left their homes to fight for the Empire should have their lands protected during their absence, and when they come back again they should not be expected to pay the rents that have accrued during their absence. The State will lose nothing by it. It simply means that their periods will be extended so that eventually the full amount will be paid. It would

be quite insufficient merely to protect their lands and accumulate it as a debt against them, unnecessarily embarrassing them when they return. The land rents accruing during the time they are away will be tacked on to the end of the period of their lease. This brings me to Clause 27. The original Act provides that no person unless he is 16 years or over may select land, and this clause is inserted to set at rest doubts that have arisen respecting the right of selectors to transfer, or in other ways deal with their land before reaching the age of 21. The proviso provides that the terms of a transfer, sublease, mortgage, or other dealing may be reviewed by a judge of the Supreme Court on application in chambers. Clause 28 is a first step in the scheme of making provision for returned soldiers. It provides for land being set apart specially for them in connection with the scheme of repatriation now under consideration, and which, as I have previously said, will have to occupy the attention, not only of the State, but of the Commonwealth Government and Parliament and I would add, of the people generally in the community, probably for many years to come. Provision is made for appointing a special board to deal with such applications and for the land set apart being disposed of under the provisions of the principal Act with such modifications as may be considered necessary. Those modifications as they are found necessary will be prescribed by regulation, and such regulations will be submitted to Parliament for its approval. It also provides for any conditional purchase lands held by returned soldiers under ordinary conditions being surrendered and brought under the conditions of this clause. That is to say, if a soldier already holding land has gone away and comes back and finds that the scheme provided for returned soldiers not previously on the land is more advantageous than for him to continue in the occupation of the property he previously held, he can make application to surrender his holding under the old conditions and bring it under the new. Clause 29 provides that the same procedure as prescribed in the Transfer of Land Act shall be applied to executions. In this there is no new principle involved.

Clause 30 is one of the most important in the Bill. It deals with pastoral leases and provides for the granting of pastoral leases for a term expiring on the 31st December, 1948, the rate of rent to be based on the pastoral capabilities of the land, its distance from port or railway, etc., and the rent shall not be less than the rates at present in force, and at the end of 15 years the rent shall be reassessed for the remainder of the term of the lease, but shall not be increased by more than 50 per cent. of the rent at the time of the granting of the lease. Subclause 2 fixes a maximum area to be held by one person in the same division at a million acres. Provision is made for this maximum to be reduced by the Governor in special districts or localities. At the present time no maximum area is provided. Subclause 3 provides that within five years from the commencement of the lease improvements to the value of £5, and within 10 years improvements to the value of £10, shall be effected for each thousand acres, and that these improvements shall be maintained during the term of the lease. Subclause 4 provides for the holder of an existing lease surrendering it and applying for a new lease under the Bill; and pending the fixing of the rent and the issue of the new lease, he shall pay double the rent fixed by his surrendered lease. It is anticipated that this provision will result in a considerable increase of revenue from pastoral leases. The revenue from these leases at present is something like £68,000 per annum, and it is felt that a good many pastoralists will be anxious to obtain the additional security that a longer tenure gives, and that pending the reclassification they will gladly pay a double rental. If all did it, it would of course mean an increased revenue of approximately the amount at present collected, namely, £68,000 per annum. The reason for granting this extended period is that it is recognised that it is impossible for pastoralists to launch out with large sums of money unless they have some security of tenure. It is felt that by giving the security of tenure a great deal more revenue will come into the State, a great deal more money will be spent by the pastoralists and as a natural consequence there will be a considerable increase in

wealth in the shape of increased growth of cattle and of wool. Provision is made that if the lessee is dissatisfied with the amount of rent determined by the new lease he may, before the issue of such lease, revert to the surrendered lease and also that to such extent as improvements were effected on the land prior to the surrender of the lease he shall be exempt from the provisions of Sub-clause 3, shall not be required to effect further improvements. Subclause 5 provides that the provisions relating to rent and improvements shall not apply to leases in the South-West division. I have here a map for the convenience of members not entirely familiar with the different divisions. The last clause of the Bill makes provision for the transfer of portions of leases. This is not provided for in the existing Act, and occasionally the omission has given rise to a good deal of trouble. It might happen that the holding of one pastoralist is of awkward shape, perhaps a portion of it runs into an area subsequently taken over by another pastoralist; and whereas the two might be mutually agreed that it would be advantageous if that portion of the lease was transferred to the other block, there is not a ready means of doing it. This clause provides for the transfer of such portions. When the Bill is in Committee I propose to submit a new clause which is intended to deal with group interests, such as those of Vestey Brothers. I have nothing more to say except to assure hon. members that there is very little, if anything, of a party nature about the Bill. In fact there is no harm in saying that the most controversial clauses were fixed up and agreed to by a small sub-committee representing the different parties in another place. From that point of view I do not think there will be found anything particularly contentious in the Bill, but of course every clause is of great importance indeed. Fortunately we have in this House quite a number of members who are familiar with all phases of both the agricultural and the pastoral industries, and I confidently look to those members to bring their knowledge and experience to bear in the consideration of this measure. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. A. SANDERSON (Metropolitan-Suburban) [3.59]: Let me congratulate the

leader of the House on what we have just listened to. It was an intellectual treat and, I think, an exhibition of physical strength which was delightful to witness. Even when it is quite obvious that the hon. member knows nothing whatever about the particular matter he is dealing with, he speaks with so much fluency, and with such grace, and with such curious felicity of language, that it is a pleasure to listen to him. Furthermore, let me say to the hon. gentleman that he quite disarms any criticism so far as he himself is concerned, because we know that he is doing his duty to his Government and to his country by introducing the Bill. In fact, there is no one else in the House could introduce it. He disarmed my criticism by the graceful manner in which he pointed out or indicated or suggested that there was something a little out of the ordinary in the way business is being conducted. But he did it with such grace and such dignity as quite disarmed my criticism. When I come to the Government the hon. gentleman represents, however, and to the conduct of business which we are asked to sanction, I have indeed something to say. I might be asked by members of the Council why I should jump up immediately to speak on this Land Bill. Let me assure hon. members that so far as the principles of the Bill, and its clauses, are concerned, I shall have something to say; but I will be the first to recognise that any authority I can claim to speak on this question is very slight. Some little authority I am able to claim, as I will be able to explain; but certainly only a small modicum. That is not why I rise, with some little alarm, which may curdle into indignation, if I understand that it is the intention of the leader of the House to attempt to sit here until this Bill gets through. If that is the intention, I can tell him that I shall offer the most uncompromising hostility to such a procedure. We know the Government are bankrupt in purse; but, if they make such an attempt, they will be bankrupt in reputation too. If, as not infrequently happens, I have to stand here alone, if I have no assistance whatever, I still shall stand here, trying to represent 14,000 electors, in order to protest in the strongest possible manner against the proposal to put this Bill through

here now. It will be interesting to make a survey of the political situation, as very pertinent to the introduction of this Bill, and the discussion on the Bill, and the manner in which it is proposed to pass this legislation through. I beg the Colonial Secretary to accept my assurance that it is not the conduct of business in this House that I protest against. I admit the hon. gentleman has no other alternative. He belongs to the Government, and therefore he must stand by them. It is the conduct of the affairs of this country that I am protesting against. Let us review the political situation in this State. If this measure came from another Chamber at the instance of a Government who had fought an election on this Bill, who had been returned by an overwhelming majority for the purpose of carrying the Bill, and if the measure had passed the lower House by an overwhelming majority, my protest would be as strong as it is now, if not stronger, against any attempt to put the measure through this Chamber in the way which I understand is proposed. If the Colonial Secretary will give me the slightest indication that he does not propose to carry the measure through at the present sitting, I will promise to sit down in three minutes. Even if I were given that assurance, I would like to make one or two observations. However, I will promise to break off in the middle of a sentence if the hon. gentleman will give me the slightest indication that he is prepared to consider the question of not going on with this Bill now.

The Colonial Secretary: I shall certainly consider the wishes of the House.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The hon. member will be compelled to do that. I do not thank him for that assurance. I will undertake to answer for his doing that.

The Colonial Secretary: I cannot suggest that I would do it under compulsion.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Let the leader of the House not be merciful. We will not appeal to him. We will be merciful. I stand here alone at the present moment, quite indifferent to what other members may think. I am regarding the matter from my own constitutional duty, from the duty I owe to the people who sent me here. I know already that there are some members—I do

not know how many—who are prepared to support me in the attitude I take up. I know it from the encouraging hear, hear's which have been uttered.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: The country supports you, too.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I think so. At any rate, I can claim to speak, with my colleague, on behalf of a larger number of people in this country than can anyone else in this Chamber. I do not wish to boast of that fact, or to emphasise it too much, or to arrogate to myself that I am an important person because I do represent so many electors, any more than I would suggest that hon. members from the North Province are unimportant because they represent only a few hundreds where I represent a few thousands.

Hon. J. Cornell: You represent people; they represent acres.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I do not wish to associate myself with that remark. I was born on a sheep station, and nurtured amongst pastoralists. Many of the pastoralists are among my greatest friends. I regard the pastoralists of Australia as one of the finest sections, if not the finest, of the people of Australia. Let there be no mistake on that point. So far from entertaining any hostility to the pastoralists, I should be only too glad if I could, consistently with what I regard as my public duty, do anything to help them. But I say I would be a traitor to the people I represent, and a traitor to the country—

Hon. W. Kingsmill: And to this House.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: That is the most encouraging interjection I have had. I welcome it most warmly, and I thank the hon. member for it, because I know what weight his opinion carries. I do not wish for a moment to be associated in any degree whatever with those people—and there are numbers of them in this country—who are hostile to the pastoralists, but I would ask the pastoralists not to alienate the sympathy of one who has the deepest respect for them, and who is most anxious indeed to forward their interests in every possible manner he can, consistently with his responsibilities to the public. If the pastoralists think that by a majority of one in another Chamber, and

by attempting to fatigue this House, they are going to put through something which they ought not to get through, they will bitterly regret having made an enemy of one who has all his life been, and who wishes to remain, their friend.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: There is only one pastoralist in the other House.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The Government that sent this measure to us have a majority of only one in another place. A review of the political situation in Western Australia would justify this House in rejecting the Bill at the present time almost without discussion. Who will tell me that the present Government represent the people of Western Australia? Who will dare to assert that? As I have said, the Government are already bankrupt in purse, and this Bill is the last thing needed to render them, in my estimation, bankrupt in reputation as well. Just let hon. members picture to themselves the leader of any Australian House of Parliament, even a politician of the lowest rank and the lowest order, telling any Australian political Chamber that they must pass in a few minutes—because that is what it amounts to—a Bill to facilitate the development of the lands of the State. Let hon. members imagine such a politician telling an Australian House of Parliament that the emergency is so great, that the problems to be decided are so immense, that there cannot be the slightest consideration or discussion of the question. We know that from the very start of Australian history land settlement has been the question which has raised the greatest amount of discussion. When we know that we have on the statute-book of Western Australia many Acts dealing with land settlement, and many amendment Acts—I refer not only to land legislation, but to such things as Agricultural Bank Acts—can we accept the proposition that all the work of the past has been so unsatisfactory, so badly drawn, or that the conditions to-day are so entirely altered, and that the urgency is so imperative, that we must pass such a measure as this through in a few minutes? I am discussing the refusal of the Minister to disavow the intention to put this Bill through at one sitting, unless compelled to refrain from doing so by members of this

House. For that matter, I will take care that he shall not do it. I have a constitution possibly not quite equal to the hon. gentleman's, and a vocabulary perhaps not so polished, though certainly as extensive, as his; but I promise him that so far as I may be permitted by you, Mr. President, and so far as my political and physical strength goes, I shall oppose this Bill tooth and nail unless I now receive a distinct assurance from the Minister that he will not attempt to put his Bill through without the fullest consideration. I asked for an indication previously; I am raising my terms, and becoming more severe; and I now ask for a distinct assurance. I will pause.

The Colonial Secretary: I can give you that assurance.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: That it will not be put through?

The Colonial Secretary: Without the fullest consideration.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Ah! I must be more clear. I am going to give the Bill the fullest consideration, but I want an assurance that the Colonial Secretary will not put this Bill through to-night, and I will pause occasionally to see if my forward movement, the advance by myself, is telling on the trenches of the Government. There is matter sufficient in the Bill, and in its appendix—I think the hon. member called it—to last me for several hours. I would draw the attention of members to these pages that have been supplied to us. What is the meaning of this? This is a work I wanted to do myself. It has been very badly done by somebody else. When I take on myself to speak on a Bill I like to make myself—I will not say master of the subject, but acquainted with the subject, and since the Government have attempted to show us how to deal with a discussion of the Bill, let me tell them how I deal with a discussion on a Bill. I look at the title first—an Act to further amend the Land Act. I put the Bill away altogether. I take a sheet of paper and write down what I know about the Land Act; what my opinion of the Land Act is; what past legislation of any importance I am acquainted with, and what amendments, if I had my own way, I would suggest, and what the effect of those amendments would be, and how far it would be possible to carry

the people of the country with me in making these amendments, and how far it would be possible to get it through the Lower House. Having done that, I take up the Bill, and I find out then what the proposal is. As usually happens in an important Bill there are references and cross-references to other Bills, and I have my copy of the Acts of Western Australia and I go through those and find out exactly what the position is and what is the position of affairs contained in the Bill. This scheme of mine, which I carry out very completely, is what has been attempted in dealing with this Bill. This is a most unusual course for the Government to pursue, and so effective have been the guns which I have brought to bear on the subject already that there is no one in charge of the Bill to listen to what I have to say. I do not blame the hon. member; there are limits to his patience and his physical endurance.

Hon. J. E. Dodd: Some members will listen.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I put it another way. Having disposed of the Minister, I will now address myself to hon. members.

The PRESIDENT: Address the Chair, please.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I beg your pardon. I address my remarks through you Sir, to hon. members, and ask them for an assurance, because, let me say again I do recognise members sitting opposite—how gladly I recognise them—as authorities on the question we are discussing, the land question.

Hon. J. Cornell: I think the Minister feels his position keenly.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: There are many members in this Chamber highly qualified on the subject, and I hope they will speak at length and give us the full benefit of their valuable knowledge and experience. As I have explained, I am asking the Government and the leader of the House to let those hon. members have an opportunity to give us the benefit of their advice, and that opportunity we shall not have if an attempt is made to put the Bill through to-day—quite impossible. And since I cannot get an assurance from the Minister—

The Colonial Secretary: What assurance does the hon. member want?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I want an assurance that the Bill will not be put through this week. That is the assurance I want.

The Colonial Secretary: The hon. member said to-day just now.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I do not want to quibble. I am not going to give my assurance unless I clearly understand what I am doing. The hon. member will bear witness, speaking generally, I never attempt to quibble or hide my words, to cover up my thoughts in words which people cannot understand, and I make a distinct suggestion that if hon. members adjourn the discussion of this Bill till next week, I am prepared, under protest then—if I could get my own way I would reject the second reading of the Bill at once, but I recognise the position of affairs, it would be unfair. I also recognise that it would not be tolerated by hon. members to reject the second reading at once.

The Colonial Secretary: Will the hon. member permit me. Hon. members are aware that members of Parliament generally are anxious to close the session as soon as possible. It is not the desire of the Government to rush anything or ask the House to do anything improper. And I think the hon. member is not alone; there are other members who consider that they will not be doing their duty to the country if they pass the Bill straight off at one sitting. I am prepared to give the hon. member an assurance that if the House will deal with the second reading, members can then decide whether the Committee stage shall be taken to-morrow or at the beginning of next week.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Will the Government support it?

The Colonial Secretary: I will leave it to the House to decide, having passed the second reading, whether we shall take the Committee stage to-morrow or at the beginning of next week.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I cannot see any object. Having attempted to do this I am frightened. I have got to be here day and night with our Standing Orders suspended, and I am frightened, owing to the pressure

of circumstances. But do not let the hon. member think there is any reflection on him. Owing to the pressure of circumstances he may be compelled to do what he does not desire.

The Colonial Secretary: I will not take the Committee stage to-day.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I cannot stop up late at night; it fatigues me, and last night we were a little late. I have got to be here day and night to watch the affairs that have been entrusted to me by my electors. I am not proposing to dictate to the Colonial Secretary or to members of this Chamber if it is the wish of members of this Chamber to get through the second reading to-day. I think personally we are making a great mistake. They will be getting rid of a responsibility and it will reflect little credit on them, but that is their business. I do not presume to criticise them, but I say we should not take this Bill through now. I want to discuss the offer. We have now a distinct offer from the Government and this is the difference between us—I am quite content to leave the matter in the hands of the House; I am not frightened what the House will do. I want an assurance from the Government that they do not wish (that is asking too much) that they do not propose to push the Bill through—a very distinct assurance. If they insist on passing this Bill we shall have to be here next week. I do not pledge myself to any course of action. I do not pledge myself to assist in getting that Bill through next week. But I shall be satisfied if members consent to take the Committee stage next week. I give no assurance as far as I am personally concerned that I will not discuss the Bill in Committee at very great length, and I have no power or wish, even if I had power, to try and hurry up the second reading debate. I am by myself; I am ploughing a lonely furrow, as Lord Roseberry once said. But I find I have a number of people behind me now. There is a number of members here who ought to speak on the second reading. It seems to me the hon. member is possibly the best judge that there is not reasonable time for members to discuss the second reading as they should up to twelve o'clock to-night. That is not my position; I am not speaking for them. Events will decide that. I think I have es-

tablished something. I think I have established this: that the leader of the House, that the Government, are prepared, not under compulsion, but as a matter of course, to let the Committee stage of the Bill go to next week.

The Colonial Secretary: I feel that some members prefer to take the Committee stage to-morrow, but I will abide by the decision of members whether they will sit to-morrow and take the Committee stage then, or on Tuesday.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: It is a pity we are a non-party House, because no one can pledge anybody else. I have not spoken to more than one or two, and that is only on the question of speaking, not voting. I cannot pledge a single member of the Chamber to any course of action. I only speak for myself. If it is the wish of a majority, large or small, to go into the Committee stage to-morrow—

Hon. J. M. Drew: The second reading stage should be adjourned until to-morrow.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I think so too. I have not the slightest hesitation in telling hon. members that they will be neglecting their public duties if the consideration of this Bill is not adjourned; but that is their business, and therefore I am not in a position to bargain with the leader of the House, who can find out more easily than I can what the wishes of hon. members are. The leader of the House has greater responsibilities than I have. Mine are very few. I am not in a position physically, while I am continuing my argument on the question of this Bill, to go round to hon. members and find out what their wishes are. A word from the leader of the House will put me right in a moment. But that is by the way. Now to come back to the Bill. One can begin at the end of this Bill. As a matter of fact I began with the pastoralists and I will not say anything more about them at present, but I am personally interested and acquainted with Clauses 3, 5, and 6 and with the leasehold system of tenure. Is it not very significant of the foggy condition of the mind of the country people, and indeed, not only the country people, but some of the town people too, when we find this vexed question of the leasehold and freehold system introduced into the Bill? Who are the

wealthiest men connected with the land in Australia? Who are the most enterprising men, and who the most business like? There can be only one answer to that—the pastoralist. And what is all this extraordinary agitation that goes on from a business point of view, because there is a sentimental aspect to the question which I propose to put before hon. members? The most intelligent and the richest and the most business-like practical men dealing with the land are the leaseholders of Australia. Taking all the responsibility of voicing my own opinions and the opinions of the people whom I represent, it is most encouraging to find that on the Land Bill, I am going to have an overwhelming majority in my favour. I am proud that I am not standing alone. I would ask members of the Country party and representatives of the small man on the land if they would not be well advised to sit down one day and think over this question of leasehold *versus* freehold from a business point of view, because it is obvious to my mind that the leasehold is a much finer thing in this country than the freehold, and if there is anyone stronger in favour of the freehold than I am I have not found him yet. Whether it is in the town or the country, from a business point of view, so long as we have security of tenure, what does it matter whether we have leasehold or freehold? England is supposed to be the land of freehold tenure. As a matter of fact it is nothing of the sort. One-half of the land is held on lease. I am speaking of business land and the people there do not care whether they have leasehold or freehold, so long as they have a chance of making some cash out of the deal. To attack the Labour party simply because they are in favour of leasehold as against the freehold seems to me to be a great mistake. If hon. members will fully grasp that, it will give them a very free mind in dealing with this question of land tenure generally. Why should we envy, as a lot of people do, the successful squatter? If he puts money in his own pocket he cannot help benefiting the rest of us. We are the trustees of the people and not only for the people, but for what Sir George Grey called the unborn millions in this country, and therefore, not with any heat, or

animosity against the squatter, but in the coolest possible manner and in the most business-like way, and also in the most polite manner, we will say we must have the terms of the lease put down in black and white. Here is the strength of the whole constitution of the British Empire. Once we have put our name to a scrap of paper we ought then to stand by it whatever the result. But I am afraid that in some parts of Australia they have not done that and trouble has broken out. I was born on a sheep station and I have mixed with pastoralists. I have travelled all over Australia and I have made it my business, not only in Australia, but also in New Zealand, to get into close quarters with this land question. I have endeavoured to find out the difference between the 99 years leases, the special occupation leases, and the conditional purchase leases in the different States, and if we wish to confuse ourselves still more we should go to New Zealand and try and understand the Maori system of land tenure. There may be 999 people owning a block of land and everything may be finished off when the one-thousandth person will come along and establish his claim, and the whole thing is knocked on the head. I do not know whether anyone here has had anything to do with the question of land tenure in New Zealand. Conditions in some parts of Western Australia are not unlike those in some parts of New Zealand and, therefore, if we wish to understand this question of conditional purchase and other leases, of which I can claim to have personal knowledge, and a fairly close idea of what it is all about, I say let us go through the Bill clause by clause, and then we will be in the position to come forward to the people and say, "We have considered the matter, and there are many debatable points; we have given full consideration to them; we are going to give the squatters a reasonable and fair, if not a generous consideration, recognising the magnificent work they have done in this country." We have preserved to the best of our ability all existing rights and revenues which are very important at the present moment, and we have gone further than that, we have tried to preserve for posterity the magnificent heritage which was handed

over to us by the Imperial authorities. I think the Imperial authorities, if not otherwise engaged, would be shocked beyond measure to think that we were going to deal with this magnificent heritage they gave us in the way it is now suggested. We did not win this heritage at the point of the sword. Many of us have won it by having been born in the country. The leader of the House is not one of them. He boasted the other day of his pride in his English birth. I boast with bated breath that I am an Australian, and on that account I feel a very deep interest in this matter. Let us take Clause 6. I know a good deal about this. I have a little orchard at £1 an acre, or 10s. an acre. There is no urgency whatever for putting this thing through. I cannot tell hon. members, although I am somewhat intimately acquainted with this question of the principal Act, the meaning of Section 6. I have had personal and practical experience and have paid the cash over the counter, and I say, what is the urgency of this clause? If there is no urgency there is some sinister influence at work, whether in the department, or in the Government, or on the part of the Commonwealth Government, or the Taxation Department, I do not know. If there is no urgency for the clause going through like this, it is the very best reason of all for striking it out of the Bill. If it is considered essential to put certain clauses through in this Bill. I say, let us set to work and strike out all those clauses which are not urgent. Let the Government do this. We shall then be in a position to know exactly what we are going to discuss. I have not taken down the alterations made to the explanation by the Colonial Secretary. He told us that these papers, which were to assist us, are all wrong and that we had to re-number them. I have not done so. Now, it is very probable that I may be put into the painful position of being rightly called to order because I shall be discussing in Committee some clause when I should be discussing some other clause. If my representative in business gave me stuff like this to read, with red ink all over it, illegibly written, with clauses struck out, and everything altered, I would say it was a very slovenly piece of work,

which would only possibly be tolerated and excused in a newspaper office at the very moment of going to press, when sometimes there is confusion and rush, and hurry and bad writing. As a matter of physical disability I cannot possibly read it. I think there is some Standing Order under which one can make an exhibit upon the Table of the House. With your permission sir, I will be glad to put this on the Table and ask hon. members to look at it and tell me if they think I have exaggerated.

The PRESIDENT: You have my permission.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I am not going to put all of these sheets upon the Table and make a litter there with them. The typewriter which has been used in connection with them is a bad one and the typing is bad. I do not blame the typist because probably she is being overworked as well as myself.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: On a point of order. Is the hon. member in order in directing that a certain paper should be laid on the Table of the House? Is there not a proper course to pursue?

The PRESIDENT: I gave the hon. member permission to put the leaf on the Table; I hope the House will support me.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I thank you, sir. I am referring to what I call the technical part of these papers. I ask anyone to look at these after the adjournment and tell me if they are able to read it. It was placed before us by the Minister for the express purpose of assisting us in a discussion on the Bill.

Point of Order.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: I rise to a point of order. As the hon. member seems to be in some difficulty in discussing this Bill, I would like to know whether it would be in order for the Colonial Secretary to go over the explanation which he did this afternoon, so that the hon. member might get a better grasp of the Bill and continue his remarks. Would it be in order for the Colonial Secretary to assist the hon. member by repeating what he said in his second reading speech regarding the collections in the papers that were laid upon the Table of the House?

Hon. A. Sanderson: Speaking on the point of order, I would say that this would not assist me in the slightest degree. It would confuse me. I have no desire to get any more matter.

The President: I do not see any Standing Order on the matter. I leave it entirely to the House as to whether members would like the Colonial Secretary to repeat his remarks. If there is a general wish that he should repeat his remarks, I am sure he would do so. I will just ask hon. members. The question is whether the House wishes the Colonial Secretary to repeat his explanation of the Land Act Amendment Bill under discussion with regard to the change of numbers.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	12
Noes	..	..	..	..	9

Majority for 3

AYES.

Hon. H. Carson	Hon. J. A. Greig
Hon. H. P. Colebatch	Hon. J. W. Hickey
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. J. W. Kirwan
Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. H. Millington
Hon. J. E. Dodd	Hon. C. McKenzie
Hon. J. M. Drew	(Teller.)
Hon. J. Ewing	

NOES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. A. Sanderson
Hon. J. Duffell	Hon. C. Sommers
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom
Hon. J. J. Holmes	Hon. E. Rose
Hon. G. W. Miles	(Teller.)

Motion thus passed.

Debate resumed.

The PRESIDENT: Hon. members had better provide themselves with the Explanation so that they may mark the necessary particulars upon them whilst the Colonial Secretary is enumerating the changes.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [5.0]: I am happy to oblige the House and am glad of the opportunity of showing Mr. Sanderson that the mistakes in the numbers are not due to any error on the part of the typist who prepared them. They are due to the fact that these tables were compiled before the Bill was amended in another place. In the course of these amendments in another

place, additional clauses were put in and of course wherever clauses were put in between two clauses it made the numbers here inaccurate. On page 1, No. 2 stands as it is at present. Clause 4 is a new clause to which no reference is made in these papers. The only purpose of these papers is to show the sections of the principal Act which are affected by the Land Act Amendment Bill. Clause 4 in these papers becomes Clause 5 of the Bill, 5 becomes 6, 7 becomes 8, and 8 becomes 9, 9 becomes 10; 10 becomes 11; clause 12 is a new clause to which no reference is made in these papers; 11 becomes 13; 12 becomes 14; 15 is a new clause to which reference is made in these papers; 13 becomes 16; 14 becomes 17; 18 is a new clause altogether; 15 becomes 19; 16 becomes 20; 17 becomes 21; 18 becomes 22; 19 becomes 23; 20 becomes 24, and 21 becomes 25. The other clauses are entirely new ones and consequently are not referred to in these papers. I should like with your permission, Mr. President, to refer to what Mr. Sanderson has just said in regard to this Bill. I would like to say that during the past two or three evenings hon. members of this House have applied themselves during long hours to difficult measures in the hope, and on the understanding from me, that an endeavour would be made to close the session. I am not inclined to disagree with the hon. member, purely out of regard for him, and I tell him now I am willing to leave the decision to the House. Let the House proceed as far as it is inclined with this debate and when the House feels inclined to adjourn let the House adjourn until to-morrow or until Tuesday, I do not care which. I am entirely in the hands of the House and have no wish whatever to force anything upon the House.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I will outline the position of affairs so far as I am concerned. Reference has been made to legislation dealt with in this Chamber—I am now referring to the Bill before us but to what took place last night. I sat here most of the time and listened with attention, and I must confess I had considerable sympathy with those hon. members opposing the Bill, but I regarded that Bill in the light that whether it was passed or not

was immaterial. The Government wanted to put it through. I never wish to make myself more objectionable than I can help. Therefore I admit that a critic might say I neglected my duty in allowing the Bill to go through without any discussion; but in the circumstances I let it go through, as I regarded the Bill with indifference, whether it was passed or not. I therefore gave those hon. members no assistance. But this Bill I say is one of the utmost importance. We are dealing with the important question of the pastoral industry. I have already given my views on the Bill, but as some hon. members were not then present let me repeat that I am prepared to give the fullest consideration to the pastoralists, am most anxious to assist them in every possible way, that if any suggestion is made of cutting the pastoral sections out of this Bill it will meet with my opposition. For the reason that, in my opinion, the only justification for the Bill at all is its reference to the pastoral industry. If one goes through the Bill clause by clause it will be found that there is nothing of urgency whatever in it, nothing that cannot be done by regulation by the Minister for Lands. This Government does not represent the people of this country. That is the position of affairs, and I am not prepared to allow a snatch majority in another place to put through an important Bill like this which involves the interests not only of ourselves, and not only the Empire and the Commonwealth, but the interests of unborn millions. It would be a scandal to this country to allow this Bill to go through this Chamber without the fullest possible discussion. Do not let anyone imagine I regard as trivial—as apparently some other members regard as trivial—the responsibilities which are with us to-day. We have been placed here as trustees by the Imperial Government of the territory of this country and if hon. members will look up the *Hansard* reports—I am not referring to Western Australian *Hansard* but the Imperial *Hansard* reports of the House of Commons debates, and also I believe, although I am not positive, of the House of Lords when the Imperial Government gave us a Constitution in 1890—they

must see there that reference was made to the extraordinarily generous proposition of handing over to 40,000 people this enormous territory. I think the Imperial statesmen would be scandalised indeed to know that a Government which does not represent this country, which has no mandate from the country to deal with this matter, sought to introduce this Bill at all. And as for passing it through to-day, as is proposed, I say those statesmen would be justifiably scandalised if we did so. The financial position of this country is a serious question. I was looking at this question this morning. I have the subject on my file—

The PRESIDENT: Does the hon. member think that that is relevant to the question before the House?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I do indeed, Sir, consider it most relevant; and I am sure you will agree with me when I have dealt with the matter. When considering the financial position of this country we must all realise the need for revenue. Is there not a financial aspect running through this Bill just as there is through many other Bills which have come before us? How can we get free from the financial aspect? The Minister himself introduced the point of the financial advantage to be gained by Western Australia by the passage of this Bill. I say hon. members must look at the financial position of Australia at the present moment and they will then see the position we are in, and the danger of doing anything to jeopardise the public credit of this country. They will then see clearly the close connection between the Federal finances and the present Government's proposal. I can readily understand that you, Sir, and I, and the rest of us in this Chamber, engrossed as we must be with the public affairs of this State, of which we are the trustees, cannot see, much less trace, the close connection that exists between the financial position of the Commonwealth of Australia and this Bill. One may say that the only prosperous and successful part of this State at the present time is the pastoral areas. The pastoral industry is entitled to have its legitimate grievances dealt with and dealt with promptly. I admit that, but I say when

one looks at the financial position of Australia and the public finances of this State the only bright spot so far as Western Australia is concerned is the pastoral industry. Look at the mining industry! What do we hear about that? We know the difficulties it is labouring under, and we know the expense of conducting operations. And look at the wheat industry! The Minister for Industries declares that we must increase production. Production at a loss is worse than no production at all; and wheat production under the scheme of the Minister for Industries is in my opinion production at a loss. I should like to call members' careful attention to a statement on Federal finances recently made by Mr. Poynton, ex-Federal treasurer. This is not the statement of any irresponsible person but that of an ex-treasurer:—

At the end of the financial year 1918 Australia's war indebtedness would be £211,000,000—

That is at the 30th June, 1918—

and that sum did not include seventeen millions in deferred payments, so there ought not to be any hesitation about putting the country into a financial position.

[Hon. J. Cornell drew attention to the state of the House. Bells rung, quorum formed.]

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Since I have been a member of the House I have endeavoured to preserve the traditions of the House. I am very well aware that I have exhausted the time and the patience of hon. members, but let me tell them that they are not half so much exhausted as am I. There are traditions also which this House should preserve, and surely the noblest tradition of all is that we should conduct public business properly. I ask anyone, inside or outside the Chamber, if he thinks the procedure which has been adopted in connection with the Bill is a proper business-like procedure, a procedure which commends itself to impartial instructed opinion? Hon. members who are authorities on the question probably are, and in some cases must be, most anxious that certain clauses of the Bill should be passed. Why are they anxious? As far as I can make out it is for a particular purpose. It is not a narrow interest; I would not call it a selfish or a mercenary

interest, but knowing, as they do intimately, some particular corner of the ramifications of the Land Act, they are most anxious to get their particular clauses through. Take the pastoralists; I do not mean any reflection on them, but it is a self interest which most powerfully moves them. If they could get their portion of the Bill they would be prepared to jettison everything else.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: Who said so?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The ordinary squatter with his ordinary intelligence and ordinary self interest would be quite prepared to do it.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: Not at all.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: If the hon. member is authorised to speak, it only confirms what I say. The wealthiest class in my native land is the squatter; but the squatters should give us time to look at the clauses. If we pass the Bill to-night—

The Colonial Secretary: I have said there is no intention of passing it to-night. Possibly the hon. member has not understood me and therefore I repeat that the only desire of the Government is that hon. members should proceed with this debate until the majority of members feel disposed to adjourn. When they feel disposed to adjourn the majority shall decide whether they adjourn till Saturday or till Tuesday next. The Government have no wish apart from meeting the desires of hon. members.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: That will enable me to draw my remarks to a conclusion. That will be some relief to hon. members, and a very great relief to myself. I have not uttered one word except with the express object of fulfilling to the best of my ability what I regard as my public responsibility in this matter. This latest attitude of the Government does not absolve them one iota from the responsibility which they have put on their own shoulders in the conduct of business in regard to the Bill. That procedure in respect to the Bill has, in my estimation, made them bankrupt of any reputation, just as they are bankrupt in purse. I have very little more to say. In ordinary circumstances I should have devoted my remarks to the consideration of the Bill, whereas I have been compelled, owing to the procedure of the Government, to devote the whole of my remarks to a protest against

the conduct of the business which the Government have put forward. You do not know, Sir, how deplorable it is to me to see a political party broken up; I think it is a misfortune. To see the party to which one thought one belonged broken up; that indeed is bitter. In this State the Liberal party, owing to the action of Ministers, is broken beyond repair, and they will see when the election comes on what the country thinks of them. Indeed the party is past all possible repair, and the one question of any interest to me now—politics have gone into the Federal arena and finance has gone there as well—I have no more interest in the conduct of public affairs in this country by the present Government or indeed any other Government that may succeed them, except the financial interest which I have just as much in a smaller degree in the little township and road board district where I live. That is the limitation of my interest in the present Government, and I say they have smashed the Liberal party in this country beyond repair. I have finished as far as public matters are concerned, finished in the Chamber and outside, finished altogether. And I have given the matter consideration for the last three years, especially during the last three months. I say that to me there is nothing left except the financial position of the road board where I live and the financial position of the sovereign State of Western Australia. Except for the strength and uplifting hand of the British Empire this country would be as bankrupt as the Ottoman Empire. Hon. members can deal with this question themselves. I am very glad to be absolved from the responsibility of discussing the Bill, but I promise hon. members who may be permitted to speak on this question that I shall listen with the closest attention to whatever they may say, and that after the outline I have given of the views I take on one or two of these matters I will reserve an open mind on the question until they shall have finished their deliberations.

Hon. C. SOMMERS (Metropolitan) [5.28]: I hope some arrangement will be come to whereby this session may be closed this week. I see a lot of good in the Bill in parts. In connection with those parts appertaining to pastoral matters I am as

strongly opposed to their being dealt with this session as is Mr. Sanderson. I appeal to the Government to make some arrangement before tea as to their attitude in regard to the Bill, and by which the pastoral clauses shall be left out. I agree with the Government that our energies should be devoted to putting right those little anomalies which occur in the existing Act, by carrying the amendments contained in the Bill. Anyone having any practical knowledge of the Land Act will agree that this is a good Bill and deserving of every support. I am prepared to sit late to pass those clauses of the Bill which demand our attention. But, coming to the pastoral part, I would like to say we have parted with most of our assets, pledged our credit to the extent of millions, and to my mind the only real asset we have left is contained in the pastoral leases. I do not know whether those leases are worth the £68,000 per annum we are getting for them. I do not know how much they are worth, nor does anyone else until we have the classification, but I am hopeful that they may be worth half a million per annum. It is possible. Let us develop them to the utmost extent, but let us take time. It is only fair to the pastoralist that he should be told as early as possible what he is to expect—what length of term, what area, and what rent. But a Bill of this sort, with such immense possibilities, ought to be thoroughly discussed; and therefore I suggest that the portion dealing with pastoral leases be deferred to next session. I know it may be argued that new developments cannot take place in the back country unless new areas are thrown open to the pastoralists. But at present it is impossible to obtain wire for fencing purposes, and impossible to secure labour; and, in fact, all development work is most expensive just now. Money, too, is difficult to obtain. In view of this combination of circumstances, what harm can result from delaying the pastoral clauses until next session? I wish the Bill to go through with the exception of those clauses, which might be embodied in a separate measure to be brought down at the beginning of next session. I would suggest, further, that hon. members curtail their remarks on the second reading so as to let us get to the Committee stage,

when there will not be very much to discuss apart from the clause dealing with the conversion of leasehold town blocks into freehold. The whole difficulty centres in the pastoral clauses, and my opinion is that if those clauses are included in the Bill the measure will not go through.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM (North) [5.34]: I have looked into the Bill carefully. In accordance with the remarks I made last night on the Fire Brigades Bill, I again protest against the action of the Government in bringing down important legislation at the last moment. I should oppose the present measure seriously on that score were it not that the Bill has been under the notice of hon. members and of the public for a long time past. There is hardly a member of this House who is not familiar with the provisions of the measure. It is an important Bill; it has been before another place for some time; it has formed the subject of leading articles in the newspapers; and therefore no reflecting person, and no person interested in the development of the pastoral industry, can be ignorant of its provisions. In the circumstances, there may be some excuse for giving the Bill prompt attention. I do not for a moment say that it should be put through this afternoon, or anything of that kind; but it should receive favourable consideration. I can see no justification whatever for the dropping of the pastoral clauses, as suggested by Mr. Sommers. In another place a great deal of trouble has been taken over this Bill. Another place has had a conference of members of opposing views and opposing principles, and the conference arrived at a compromise.

Hon. H. Millington: What has that to do with us?

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: A conference means the bringing together of opposing views. We hear much of conferences and select committees and Royal Commissions. Why? So that we may obtain the concentrated opinions of people holding different ideas. After a great deal of trouble, a compromise has been reached on this Bill. Were it not for the fact that some hon. members are determined to oppose anything submitted to them, there would not be much difficulty

in regard to this Bill. I heard someone say that the passing of the Bill will rob posterity. The fact is that from every aspect this Bill will yield more revenue to the Government. Not a single provision of it but is intended to improve revenue-producing conditions. Anyone taking up unoccupied Crown lands under this measure will have to pay a higher rent than that obtaining hitherto. Any pastoralist who comes within the terms of this measure will have his holding reappraised, and will probably have to pay three or four times, or even five times, as much rent as he is paying now. In addition to that, there is to be a reappraisal after 15 years. How can anyone speak of robbing posterity in this connection? Surely our object is to perpetuate thriving industries. We have our wheat and gold industries, and we look upon the meat and wool industries as deserving of consideration. By this Bill the Government are trying to place the meat and wool industries on a good footing; and the Bill meets with opposition of which I await the justification. The main reason for extending the term of pastoral leases is that under present conditions intending pastoralists who take up unoccupied Crown lands experience much difficulty in securing support from financial institutions. That difficulty is due to the shortness of the term within which a pastoralist must recoup himself. Anyone familiar with pastoral conditions, especially in the North-West—and many members of this House are familiar with the North-West—must know that it takes a good many years to recoup the first outlay in connection with the development of pastoral lands. It is well known that even under the most favourable conditions no one ever sees a penny back in less than seven years, if starting on virgin country. Therefore it is reasonable to ask for security of tenure. The term proposed by this Bill is quite reasonable. If the measure proposed 50 years, as has been done in South Australia and elsewhere, I think I myself would protest against it. But 20 years is quite a moderate term, and one which ought to appeal to people's good sense. The leading feature of the Bill is that classification shall be undertaken by a board composed of the Surveyor General, who shall be chairman, and not more than

three other members. The only alteration I would suggest is that one of the three members should be appointed or nominated by the Pastoralists' Association, so that they may have a representative to explain their views. The variety of pastoral country in Western Australia is so great that one set of valuers cannot possibly appraise all the different areas. A man familiar with the pastoral country about Gascoyne would know nothing of the spinifex country about Port Hedland. Again, a man coming from the open lands of the Murchison, with grass and many varieties of shrubs, would say that the Port Hedland country, carrying nothing but spinifex, is of no use at all for pastoral purposes. But the man who has lived on the spinifex country has a different story to tell. From these circumstances arises the difficulty of obtaining a proper board of appraisers. The matter, however, is one which may be left to the Minister; and I do not propose to move an amendment. Everyone familiar with the Bill as introduced in another place knows that it fixed a maximum of £3 for rents. That maximum has been deleted, and I see no great objection to its deletion. I think those interested are prepared to waive the maximum, though under it they knew where they were. As to the maximum area of land to be held, I perfectly coincide with the idea that the area should not be sufficient to permit of the operation of a meat trust, or anything of that kind. But there is another class of company which does much good in pastoral matters—a firm like the New Zealand Land Company, for instance. Such firms buy stations and develop them and find a great deal of employment. It is just a question what area such firms should be allowed to hold, and whether arrangements can be made for the development of some of our unoccupied lands by such firms. As regards the view that the Bill is being rushed through the House, whilst I am prepared to admit that we have had but short notice, still it must be borne in mind that the measure is not unfamiliar to us. We already know something of the conditions of the Bill; and, were it not for a feeling, perhaps, that members do not wish to finish the measure. I think that could be done to-morrow or on Tuesday or Wednesday. However, I

am quite in the hands of the House, and I am prepared to work on Saturday or Sunday or any other day. Everyone knows I am a slave to my constituents at all times. In the circumstances, I place my services at the disposal of the House, and whatever day or hour the House may adjourn to I shall fall in with; and I shall endeavour to give effect to the ideas best adapted to the development of the country. Even at the expense of repetition I wish to emphasise that, so far from posterity being robbed, as has been said, under this Bill, additional revenue will be created by the passing of the measure. I feel confident that, if the Bill becomes law, twice the revenue quoted to-day by the leader of the House will be paid to the Government. Under the circumstances I do not see how any reasonable opposition can be made to the Bill except by those who consider that the notice has been too short and who want a little further time to reflect. I advise the leader of the House to give further time to members to reflect. There is nothing like having time to inwardly digest and understand things, and I am sure that if members have time given to them they will come to the same conclusion as I have, that this is a Bill which is in the best interests of the State.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan) [5.46]: I intend to support the second reading with certain reservations. At the same time I cannot help expressing my cordial approval of the remarks of hon. members as to the bringing down of a measure like this, I may say, in the last minutes of the session. The leader of the House says we can have as much time as we want, but if we take the time we want—and we want a great deal of time for some aspects of the Bill—we are subject to the obloquy of members of another place. Personally, I am prepared to go on with all the portions of the Bill not dealing with pastoral leases, and I think that is quite as much as the House should deal with at the present time. In dealing with pastoral leases, we are dealing with a question affecting the largest and richest area of the State. We are dealing with leases and pledging the State for 31 years, on a basis which, to me, is repugnant, on a basis which I regard as in the worst interests of the country, and in

the worst interests of the pastoralists—the payment of rents on an acreage basis. The payment of rents on an acreage basis, which the new system perpetuates, is in favour of the wealthy man and to the detriment of the poor man. Members will agree with me when I say that the pastoral industry is conducted under a system of agistment, that is, the Government let their land for grazing purposes, and wherever this is done anywhere in the world payment is made on the number of stock grazed and not on the acreage. I think it would be an equitable proposition if that principle were introduced into the Bill. Personally, I am prepared—if any member will kindly take charge of the amendments, and if I had the time—to draw up a series of amendments on that principle.

Hon. J. E. Dodd: That will be taxing thrift.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: No, it will not be taxing thrift, because we should be getting payment according to results, and that is undoubtedly a fair thing. It is no new idea of mine, because when the Bill dealing with the Carnarvon vermin board was under consideration I advocated the principle then. Let me say that the rent, which is a mere trifle to the large and opulent squatter, is a matter of great difficulty for the small man, the pioneer who is just starting. They may be starting side by side, and if so they probably will have to pay the same rental. That is not an equitable state of things. The system of appraisement is going to be according to the carrying capacity of the country, not according to the number of stock depastured thereon, and the man who takes up virgin land will naturally have this land assessed at the highest rental. Then the pastoralists would be poor for a number of years.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: It is the same thing.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: It is not the same thing. The carrying capacity of the country is not the same thing as the stock depastured thereon.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: It will suit the North-West, what you say.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: I want to alter the whole principle of the payment of rent to an agistment basis, which is a fair and

businesslike proposition. If a man depastured 100,000 sheep he must pay according to the sheep depastured, and it is easy to arrive at an estimate of this, especially in regard to sheep, because there is an annual shearing, and the Government will be able to acquire definite data as to what each man should pay. Members will see that in the case of a man going out into good country with very few sheep, as Sir Edward Wittenoom says, it will take six or seven years before he will get any profit. We are to ask that man to pay the same rent per thousand acres as the man who has built up his flocks and herds. I hope the House will take into consideration when they discuss these pastoral clauses the system I am endeavouring to explain, and will give it a little more than a passing thought. As to the urgency of the matter, I am aware that the Government go about with the fear of death before their eyes—politically I mean. But I believe a respite has been granted to them until some time in July, and I suppose the bait of office will be more tempting to their opponents than at the present time, so they have no immediate need to fear. Personally I say there is so great a distinction between the circumstances surrounding the pastoral industry of Western Australia and all the rest of the land of Western Australia. I should prefer to see pastoral holdings made the subject of separate legislation, that Acts of Parliament should exist dealing separately with agricultural lands and with pastoral lands. The State has been fortunate up to the present time, for in the Eastern States there have been very bitter and protracted feuds between the farmer and the squatter. There has been no such difficulty here. I hope the Government, during recess—which I hope will be for them a happy one and as long as they can make it—will devote some of their energies to the consideration of a scheme dividing legislation on this subject into two parts. Thinking as I do and advocating amendments which strike, not at the details of the Bill, but at the basis on which the pastoral rents are founded, I think members will agree that in my case it is far too short a time, even if Tuesday is adopted as a sitting day, for me to

give proper consideration to the Bill. I think the Government should postpone the pastoral clauses until next session. I feel sure then that members will give far better consideration to them than now. Sir Edward Wittenoom has said that the provisions of the Bill have been known to members for a long time. May I point out that the pastoral provisions of the Bill, in which the hon. member is interested, were not known to the Government last night. They were unthought of.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: It is the conditional purchase clauses I want.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: Then if that is true, language was truly given to us to conceal our thoughts. I share my friend's wish to get through the conditional purchase parts of the Bill, and perhaps he wishes that the important portion of the Bill dealing with pastoral leases should receive that consideration which can only be given to it by an adjournment for a few weeks. With these reservations, I support the second reading of the Bill.

On motion by Hon. J. E. Dodd debate adjourned.

BILL—LAND AND INCOME TAX ASSESSMENT.

Message received from the Assembly notifying that the Council's amendment had been made as requested.

BILL—TREASURY BONDS DEFICIENCY.

Message received from the Assembly notifying that the Council's amendment had been made.

BILL—BUNBURY TOWN LOT 318.

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

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [5.59]: I have used my best endeavours to ascertain the wish of the House as to the length of the

adjournment, and unless I am grievously wrong I interpret the wish of members is not to proceed with the Land Bill until next Tuesday. That, I take it, is the opinion of the House, and if I am right in that no special motion is necessary.

House adjourned at 6 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Friday, 16th March, 1917.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 3 p.m., and read prayers.

BILL—TREASURY BONDS DE- FICIENCY.

Council's Amendments.

Schedule of six amendments requested by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Carpenter in the Chair; The Premier in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Clause 4.—Strike out the clause and insert the following:—“(1) It shall be lawful for the Colonial Treasurer, during the financial year ending the 30th day of June, 1917, and any subsequent financial year, to apply any moneys standing to the credit of the Public Account to meet expenditure authorised by the Supply Acts and the Appropriation Act in force for the time being. (2.) If at the expiration of any financial year it shall appear that the expenditure as authorised to be made from the consolidated revenue fund has exceeded