

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 9th December, 1924.

	PAGE
Loan Estimates 1924-25	2223
Bills: Land Tax and Income Tax, 1A.	2223
Plant Diseases Act Amendment, report ...	2230
Transfer of Land Act Amendment, 2A., Com... report	2230
Main Roads, 2A.	2231
Fair Rents, Com.	2235
Warona-Lake Clifton Railway, returned ...	2242

area, in connection with which the State has now embarked upon a larger scheme. Further, there are harbour improvements to be effected at the outlying ports, involving the expenditure of large sums of money additional to the amount annually required at the State's main port, Fremantle. The agricultural development taking place renders it necessary that a substantial sum be made available to the institutions catering for the man upon the land; that is to say, the Agricultural Bank, the Industries Assistance Board, and the Soldier Settlement Scheme. In addition, there is group settlement, which, as hon. members will find, represents the largest item of expenditure on these Loan Estimates. It is, of course, essential that money should be found to continue the work and the annual expenditure on this head, at least for a year or two, will be an increasing one. That being the situation, we find ourselves compelled to provide a large sum of money from loan each year. I would remind hon. members of the fact that included in our loan expenditure year by year, there are considerable sums of money for works which in other States of the Commonwealth are not carried out by the Government at all, and therefore do not find a place in the loan indebtedness of those States, nor in their annual loan expenditure. I may instance such undertakings as metropolitan water supply, for which this year's Estimates provide £437,000. In Melbourne and Sydney, and I think in nearly all the other capitals of the Eastern States, that public utility is controlled by a board or trust having borrowing powers of its own, and therefore unconcerned with Parliamentary expenditure. Then, again, there is harbour trust expenditure. The Melbourne Harbour Trust has separate borrowing powers, and provides its own funds, contrary to what is the case as regards the Fremantle Harbour Trust. The amount asked for last year by the then Treasurer was £4,474,065. This included a recoup to Loan Suspense Account for the previous year of £271,217; so that the actual authorisation last year was £4,202,848. There was spent from Loan Suspense Account an amount of £238,563. The total of loan expenditure for last year was £4,175,396, less recoup to Loan Suspense Account of the previous year amounting to £271,217, as previously mentioned. This left a net expenditure of £3,904,179. Further, there was expended from the Land Improvement Loan Fund a sum of £6,486. This year I am asking the Committee for a total of £4,413,606. The amount includes a recoup to Loan Suspense Account for money expended last year of £238,563; so that the net amount represented by the present Loan Estimates is £4,175,043. There is also to be an expenditure from the Land Improvement Loan Fund of £23,700. I admit that the total seems large. It is much

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

BILL—LAND TAX AND INCOME TAX.

Introduced by the Premier, and read a first time.

LOAN ESTIMATES, 1924-25.

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read, transmitting the Loan Estimates for the year 1924-25, and recommending appropriation.

In Committee of Supply.

The House resolved itself into Committee of Supply for the purpose of considering the Loan Estimates; Mr. Lutey in the Chair.

Vote—Departmental, £107,751:

The PREMIER AND COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [4.37]: The general financial position of the State has been so freely discussed during the session that very little remains for me to say. The printed Loan Estimates give hon. members all information as to how it is proposed to expend the amount set down for the current year. It has been the policy of all sections of this community in recent years to support a programme of general developmental works. Consequently the loan expenditure from year to year has been on rather a large scale. It has involved the necessity for expending considerable loan funds each year in order to maintain works and to continue the policy of carrying out work essential to the development of Western Australia. As members know, new railways, required for those parts of the State which are still in the pioneering stage, need to be constructed in order that those districts may have the necessary facilities for marketing their produce. Whilst we are building new railways, there is also necessarily a considerable increase in expenditure each year for rolling stock and equipment. Again, there is the provision of water supply, not only throughout the country, but also for the metropolitan

larger than I had hoped it would be. Having spent a good deal of time in endeavouring to reduce the amount, perhaps I may be permitted to say that the estimates first submitted to me by the departments of what were considered to be actual requirements for the year totalled very much in excess of the amount asked for on the present Loan Estimates.

Mr. Teesdale: " 'Twas ever thus! "

The PREMIER: Yes. It has taken me some few weeks, and cost me a few headaches, to prune the departmental demands down to the amount appearing on these Estimates, which nevertheless I regard as being fairly large. But I had no alternative other than to stop some works that are now in progress or to reverse the advanced policy that has been in operation during recent years. That I had no desire to do, and so I feel that although the amount asked for is substantial, yet in the circumstances it is warranted and will in time give due return to the State. Of the total of £4,202,000, a sum of £2,202,000 is on account of the development of agriculture, leaving approximately £2,000,000 for other purposes, which is not by any means a large sum. Of this £2,000,000, railways account for £629,000, water supply for £669,000, and roads for £95,000, or a total under those three items of £1,393,000. Almost all this work was authorised prior to my taking office; in fact, I may say the only item on the Estimates that is actually mine, my own little ewe lamb, is about £8,000 for a new brick kiln at the State brickworks.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I think we will cut that out.

The PREMIER: Of the amount set apart for agricultural development, group settlement requires £1,154,000, whilst the Agricultural Bank asks for £750,000, two very large sums. Assistance to individuals under these and other heads totals £2,106,157. Of the total estimated expenditure of £4,175,000, at least £3,390,000 should return interest immediately, whilst the earnings of the balance of approximately £780,000 will be in most cases indirect. So long as loan money is expended on what has been so often described as reproductive works, there need not be any fear for our loan expenditure.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: And wealth-creating works.

The PREMIER: Yes, and reproductive works essential to the growth and development of the State. If our money is expended in that direction, although it may not give an immediate return, it will certainly come back tenfold in the years ahead of us. There are the alternatives of borrowing this money and expending it wisely, as I hope we shall do, or stagnating.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: To-morrow morning people will say that I made this speech.

The PREMIER: We have seen eye to eye on many subjects discussed in this Chamber during the past 17 or 18 years, and I am pleased to know that on this occasion we agree, I may say not for the first time.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Nor for the last time.

The PREMIER: No, even though we should change places. Under the heading of "Railways" there is the fairly large amount of £628,000. The principal new work is the Newdegate railway, which has been the subject of discussion in the House, and the circumstances of which are well-known to members. That is the principal new railway work for which provision is made on the Estimates.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: That is only £15,000.

The PREMIER: It will be sufficient for this year.

Mr. Corboy: It does not include the cost of rails and fastenings.

The PREMIER: No. It will be sufficient for this year, and it will not be necessary to begin the line until May or early in June of next year, at any rate not to have any considerable expenditure on the line until that time. Then it will be completed by August and that, I think, can be done by an expenditure of £15,000 during the present financial year. Other items for which money has to be found and provision made on the Estimates include the Busselton-Margaret River railway. This has been completed and handed over to the Working Railways, but a substantial sum has to be provided on the Estimates for the cost of its construction. Then there is the Margaret River-Flinders Bay section, which will be handed over early in the year. The Esperance line is nearing completion and will be finished during the present financial year. The Narembeen line is practically completed. For all these lines money has to be found this year, and so provision is made in the Estimates. The increase in the harvest means a large expenditure by the Railway Department.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: You have made no provision for the Narrogin-Dwarda line.

The PREMIER: Yes, you will find an item there.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: It is so small I could not see it.

The PREMIER: So that we may absorb the unemployed, it is not customary to begin railway construction until the winter comes. Therefore a comparatively small sum will be sufficient for expenditure during this financial year.

Mr. Griffiths: Apparently you have forgotten the Yarramon railway.

The PREMIER: No, provision for that will be made in the Loan Bill.

Mr. Teesdale: You have not forgotten anything.

The PREMIER: Not at all, or if I have it has been an oversight on my part. I was speaking of the equipment required for the Railway Department in consequence of the increasing needs of the department; the heavier loads and the greater yield from lands opened up from year to year. We have provided £125,000 for rolling stock this year. Approximately £100,000 of this is for the ten new locomotives, some of which are still on the water, but all of which will be in traffic for the present harvest. That £100,000 includes the much discussed £21,000 duty charged by the Federal Customs.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Will you have trucks in proportion to your increased hauling capacity?

The PREMIER: I admit that trucks and rolling stock generally are giving the Commissioner much concern. I have had strenuous argument with the railway authorities to keep them down to bedrock. However, it is considered by the Commissioner that by carefully utilising all rolling stock at command he will be able to get through the harvest satisfactorily.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Farmers are starting to growl already.

The PREMIER: They always do at the beginning, but they will settle down presently. A wrong policy has been pursued in respect of rolling stock, in that successive Governments have allowed the rolling stock to carry on so far as it may do without making provision from year to year to keep it up to requirements. Then, after the lapse of several years, very heavy expenditure is necessary in one year.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: And always when a Labour Government are in power.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Nothing of the sort.

The PREMIER: I would not say that anything was done by design, but certainly this year I have had to find £100,000 for new locomotives.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You need not have taken office.

The PREMIER: But I prefer to be here and find the £100,000. I am not complaining. Still, I say it would be much better if the policy were laid down of building a certain number of locomotives and certain rolling stock each year, so that the expenditure would be equitably distributed from one year to another, instead of allowing it to be congested into one year. Whilst it has been the policy of Parliament for many years past to go on building new railways, we have not been providing rolling stock to serve those new lines. I suppose that is the reason why those ten locomotives happen to fall into this year; or because no attention was given to the recommendation of a Royal Commissioner two or three years ago which neither the Government of the day nor the Commissioner of Railways was justified in ignoring. Included in these Estimates is £21,000 for additional plant at the workshops at Midland

Junction so that in future there shall be no question of importing locomotives at all. If we are going to build locomotives it is necessary that we should have this new plant. Then we shall be able to keep an even level of construction year by year, and so retain our skilled workmen and, as the years pass by, we shall be able to provide for our own requirements without any importations at all.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They are building engines there now.

The PREMIER: They are reconstructing several now, and I believe those engines will be as good as new; perhaps in some respects better.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Those engines are doing wonderfully good work.

The PREMIER: I believe they are. We are putting locomotives on the road that will be capable of hauling heavier loads. This tends to economical working.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The 'L's' are doing good work now.

The Minister for Railways: They are indeed.

The PREMIER: Ten of them are being reconstructed, and five are in traffic already. I believe the railways are doing good work in this respect, and with the additional plant of which I have spoken, it should be possible for us, by constructing a certain amount of all classes of rolling stock each year, to be self-contained in future. I find it necessary to provide £30,000 for the tramways, but this is for completing some of the lines already authorised and in hand, and for new cars and other equipment. No provision is made for any tramway extension this year.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We shall have to put you out on that.

Mr. Taylor: No, you are sound on that.

The PREMIER: If members could assist us to put some of the motor buses off the road, we might consider the question of tramway extension.

Mr. Mann: Do not throw away dirty water until you get clean.

The PREMIER: No, everybody seems content.

Mr. Millington: They are not content.

The PREMIER: I was under the impression that motor buses were meeting all requirements.

Mr. Millington: They are not.

The PREMIER: I think we can agree that the motor buses are on trial, and that after a lapse of say 12 months, we shall be in a better position to judge whether it will be wise to permit the growth of motor bus traffic or go in for tramway extensions to the various suburbs.

Mr. Millington: Motor buses have been tried and already have been found wanting.

The PREMIER: I think it will require perhaps 12 months to enable us to form a fairly accurate opinion as to whether the motor buses are going to be a success.

Mr. Taylor: And 12 months wear and tear on the buses.

The PREMIER: The motor bus proprietors will not have the same expenditure in the early stages that they will have to meet later on. When the motor buses are new and require comparatively little expenditure for repairs, it is all very well, but as time goes on they will find the maintenance bills heavier, particularly if the House, in its wisdom—I hope it will be wise—enables us to increase the fees. Then perhaps the competition between the railways and tramways and the motor buses may be placed upon a more equitable footing. There is also expenditure for our electricity supply. The late Government approved of the purchase of the Cottesloe district electric lighting installation, and for this and the connecting of it with the Cook-street substation £28,000 is required. For a ring main feeder for supplying the City Council £10,000 is required, and extensions and incidental works for distribution of current will involve a further £20,000. The balance on the Estimates is required for minor plant and necessary extensions. The demand for current continues to increase. The expansion of the works and the demand for current have been altogether beyond the anticipations of a few years ago, so much so that we are now faced with having to provide additional plant, the estimated cost of which is about £275,000. Tenders involving an expenditure of that amount have already been received and are now awaiting consideration. It is a huge sum of money and the Government are very much worried as to whether they will be able to accept the tenders and go on with the extensions. If we do not, we shall have the alternative of being compelled to refuse requests from all over the metropolitan and suburban districts for power and lighting.

Mr. Taylor: Largely power.

The PREMIER: And lighting as well.

Mr. Taylor: What about the Collie scheme?

The PREMIER: The Collie power scheme aims primarily at supplying Collie, Bunbury and the intermediate districts. That is the proposal recently submitted. I know it has been mooted that current should be generated at Collie and transmitted to Perth, but seeing that so much money has been expended on the East Perth power station, I do not know that anything is likely to be done in future in the direction of generating power at Collie to supply the requirements of Perth.

Mr. Sampson: Even if that were done, cables would be required to distribute the current.

The PREMIER: Yes. We have spent nearly a million pounds on the East Perth power house.

Mr. George: That will not be wasted.

The PREMIER: It has not been wasted. The power house pays its way and pays interest on expenditure. It makes no charge

whatever on the Consolidated Revenue. The power house is a paying concern and has been for many years, and I believe that, even though we embark upon the additional expenditure of £275,000, it will still pay interest on the money. If we are going to keep abreast of the times, it is necessary to utilise the most up-to-date methods for lighting and power purposes, and it would be quite a retrograde step to stand still for a number of years while people who require power for the establishment of secondary industries, and the carrying on of their business, are denied it. People so engaged would be placed at a disadvantage with competitors in the Eastern States and other parts of the world, and seeing the State has taken a monopoly of the supply of electricity, it behoves us to see that those who desire power to establish industries and carry on business shall have it available to them. Included in the estimated cost of £275,000 is a sum of £52,000 for Customs duty. Thus, the old question again arises. Sometime ago we made application to the Federal authorities to be relieved of the payment of this amount, but so far nothing satisfactory has eventuated. I need not repeat the arguments that have been used in this House in regard to the Customs duty charged on locomotives. It is a very heavy burden for the people of the State, and particularly the people of the metropolitan area, who will be called upon to meet the interest on the expenditure, to have to actually borrow the £52,000 and pay it into the Consolidated Revenue of the Commonwealth.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Every farmer in the country has to contribute, too.

The PREMIER: Yes.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What about free trade?

The PREMIER: I am coming around that way rapidly. To relate a little personal history, I was reared in the high protection atmosphere of Victoria, and imbibed those doctrines. Morning after morning I read of high protection as enunciated in the columns of the Melbourne "Age," but since I have been in this State, and as the years have passed by and I have become more distant from my earlier environment, I find myself coming round somewhat to the free trader's point of view.

Mr. Sampson: And the "Age" is losing its power.

The PREMIER: Just as I am gaining wisdom, so the "Age" is losing its power.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The tariff generally is nearly a scandal.

The PREMIER: As regards the present Federal Parliament, and indeed for many years past, the protests against high protection seem to have gone unheeded. The commodities that are not produced in Australia, and which we have no alternative to importing—these include, if not all, at least the greater part of the electrical plant and machinery required for the East Perth

power house—should not be subject to Customs duty. It cannot be justified from any point of view whatever.

Mr. George: It is absolutely immoral.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Very few members in the Federal House are not high protectionists.

The PREMIER: Because the great majority of the members of the House of Representatives represent the two big States in point of population—Victoria and New South Wales. High protection seems to suit them, and no argument to the contrary is of any avail with them. Even the free traders who went to the Federal Parliament from the outlying States, by their environment—we are all more or less creatures of our environment—seem to have weakened in their free trade principles as the years have gone by. A substantial sum has been provided for the outer harbours as well as for the Fremantle harbour. A sum of £20,000 is set aside for dredging at Bunbury. Because of the strike, I was able to reduce this item a little. More would have been required but for the fact that the dredge which we purchased from the Commonwealth Government a few months ago for £45,000, and which it was intended to transfer to Bunbury for dredging purposes, has remained in Albany, owing to the dispute with the seamen. But for that dispute, the dredge would have been in Bunbury and at work there. As soon as the dispute is settled the dredge will be taken to Bunbury, and the dredge there at present will be available for work elsewhere.

Mr. George: You are on the high road to settle the dispute, are you not?

The PREMIER: A sum of £50,000 is provided for the construction of the Geraldton harbour. The ex-Minister for Works was responsible for commencing that work. It is now proceeding at a regular pace, and the amount required this year is about the same as that of last year.

Mr. George: The start was made by your Government.

The PREMIER: But it did not go ahead. There was a hiatus or an interregnum somewhere. The hon. member got it going thoroughly and properly before he left office, and it was my obligation to find £50,000 for that work. A sum of £65,000 is required at Fremantle. That is an annual expenditure for dredging and for renewals and work the Victoria Quay. Fremantle is the main port of the State, and it is necessary that we should be able to accommodate the largest ships coming to our shores. For metropolitan water supply and sewerage the estimated amount is £533,000, of which £437,000 is for water supply and £96,000 for sewerage. This work, too, was commenced during last financial year. By no stretch of imagination can it be said the water supply of Perth and suburbs is satisfactory, and the extension of the scheme or

the provision of a new scheme was unavoidable.

Mr. George: They will have to pay, and not growl.

Mr. Taylor: So long as they pay let them growl.

The PREMIER: It is to be regretted that so much money has to be expended when the rate of interest is so high. That will mean a substantial rate charge upon the ratepayers for many years to come. If we were to wait until the interest came down we might perhaps all die of thirst, and cheap money would not then be of much avail. Included in this provision for sewerage and storm water drainage there is a sum of £57,000 for Subiaco. The work was commenced last year, and will be proceeded with until it is completed. It is a fairly substantial sum for one particular district.

Mr. Taylor: My word.

The PREMIER: I do not see why Subiaco, the most salubrious and stylish suburb in the metropolitan area, should remain without sewerage connections—

Mr. Richardson: A model suburb.

The PREMIER: While other less aristocratic suburbs have enjoyed this privilege.

Mr. George: You are going on with the work. I heard you had stopped it.

The PREMIER: We have not stopped it.

Mr. George: I thought you would have more sense than to do so.

The PREMIER: I do not think we shall find it necessary to stop any work that the hon. member started, for none of these works was started without careful consideration and without justification. If I am forced to stop the work it will be for want of money.

Mr. Pantou: We shall be getting suspicious of your good humour this afternoon.

Mr. Millington: I will get a tramway out of you.

The PREMIER: We are spending £80,000 upon the extension of the goldfields water supply for agricultural districts.

Mr. Pantou: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: Such districts as Bodallin North, Yarramony and Goomarin will be affected.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I am glad to hear that.

The PREMIER: There is a demand from many agricultural districts for an extension of the scheme. They are prepared to enter into the necessary bond, and it is merely a matter of finding the money to carry out the work.

Mr. Taylor: They have entered into bonds before.

The PREMIER: Yes, but they are improving financially and in their integrity.

Mr. Taylor: Some of them were pretty shaky.

The PREMIER: I think they will meet their obligations in the future.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They have always done so.

The PREMIER: In a big scheme of this sort one may always expect to find a few defaulters who cannot pay. They are found anywhere and everywhere. Generally speaking, those who have been served by an extension of this scheme have met their obligations. A sum of £40,000 has been provided for water supplies and drainage other than these, mostly for country districts. For mining development a sum of £100,000 has been placed on the Estimates. The expenditure last year was £78,000. This includes the concessions given to Kalgoorlie and Boulder mines with regard to cheap water. It is proposed to continue them this year. I am hopeful that by the expenditure of some of this money we may be able to effect something in the nature of a revival in some of the mining districts. It is certain that wherever reasonable opportunities occur, or where there appears to be a possibility of success, it is the policy of the Mines Department not to deny any measure of assistance that can be justified. A sound policy has been undertaken in this regard. Instead of frittering away moneys from the Mines Development Vote in small sums of £100 here and £200 there, to individuals, which have invariably been lost, the department has for some years past adopted the policy of giving substantial assistance, perhaps to the extent of a few thousand pounds, to a mine that has fairly good prospects;

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: In one case £20,000 was lent.

The PREMIER: Yes. The strange thing about it is that if we examine the advances we find that for every one of the smaller sums loaned to individuals that have been repaid, there have been 12 or more of the larger sums repaid. I do not recall one instance in which a large sum has been advanced that has not been repaid. When I was Minister for Mines some years ago, I backed one mine in the Murchison to the extent of £20,000, and did not lose a penny of it. The same thing could be said of other cases. The Leader of the Opposition subsidised the Lloyd George mine, on this side of Coolgardie, to the extent of £3,000. Two-thirds of that money was returned within a year or so. The mine then fell upon bad times, and the department came again to its assistance. There is every indication that the company will repay the additional amount loaned, and will shortly be on a good sound footing and be a producer for many years to come. For years past there has been much criticism with regard to the slaughtering accommodation in the metropolitan area. To overcome this the late Government took a lease of the West Australian Meat Export Company's works at South Fremantle. At present the killing for the metropolitan area takes place at these works, whilst the new works are under construction at Midland Junction. For these new works provision has been made on the

Estimates for £39,000. When these are completed it is expected that the facilities for killing will be entirely satisfactory.

Mr. George: Are you going to make a road to the abattoirs?

Hon. W. D. Johnston: I will see to that.

The PREMIER: I do not know. As I have already explained in my Budget Speech, it has been decided to establish an agricultural college. Provision has been made on this year's Estimates for £16,000 for the purchase of the property, and any work that may be required before the close of the financial year. I am pleased to say that a number of business men in the city have shown their interest in the establishment of the college and decided to found a research scholarship. They are raising the sum of £10,000 to that end. I hope that many other people will follow their good example in respect to other deserving institutions in the State.

Mr. Teesdale: They are sure to.

The PREMIER: The amount provided for Agricultural Bank activities has been referred to in my Budget Speech. This year we have for the bank under these Estimates a sum of £750,000. Of this sum £250,000 will be for the bank, £50,000 for the Industries Assistance Board, and £450,000 for soldier settlement. I need not dilate upon the value of the Agricultural Bank to the farming industry. It has been one of the most wonderful and beneficial institutions that was ever established in this or any other State. With regard to agricultural groups, these alone absorb 25 per cent. of the total amount on the Estimates, the amount being £1,154,000. There are at present 125 groups with a population of 9,000, including 2,258 settlers. Of these, seven have been disbanded, having reached the stage when the settlers are in a position to take over their individual holdings. The community system has been completed as well as the necessary work to enable the settlers to take over their blocks.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Has sustenance been stopped in those cases?

The PREMIER: Most of the seven groups have been disbanded of recent date, and none of the settlers would yet be in a position to be self-supporting. I need not take up the time of the Committee in dealing with the Imperial agreement. The details concerning the negotiations are well known, not only through the discussions in this Chamber, but through the correspondence that has appeared in the Press during the last few months. I wish only to repeat the statements I have already made. It seems to me an altogether extraordinary thing that whilst three parties are concerned in the agreement, only two are negotiating for the new agreement, to the exclusion of the third party, which is most vitally concerned in its terms and conditions. The Prime Minister has undertaken to submit the proposed

agreement to the Government before finally signing it, but our past experience tells us what that means. When they have reached finality and come to an agreement between the Home Government and themselves it will be submitted to this Government merely for our opinion. Whether we approve or disapprove of the terms I fear it will be signed by those two parties. That is altogether wrong. We should have been kept acquainted with what was suggested or proposed during the progress of the negotiations.

Mr. Latham: Have you not even seen a draft of it?

The PREMIER: I have seen nothing of it.

Mr. Griffiths: That shows great lack of courtesy.

The PREMIER: I have no knowledge of the proposed terms except what I have picked up in a scrappy way in the newspapers or from various sources. As the negotiations were proceeding the Commonwealth Government should have kept this Government posted, so that we might from time to time have been in a position to offer suggestions or ideas concerning our approval or otherwise.

Mr. Griffiths: They growl at you when you do not answer their wires.

The PREMIER: I was not in for a couple of days.

Mr. Taylor: You will not be absent now.

The PREMIER: I was very much disturbed by the fact that the Prime Minister had to wait 48 hours for an answer. I do not know when the agreement will be finalised, for I know nothing whatever about it.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It looks as if it were a dead letter.

The PREMIER: Yes. I was in communication with Mr. Colebatch, our Agent General, and asked him to endeavour to secure the terms of the agreement with the other States, such as Victoria and New South Wales, which have better agreements than ours. An undertaking was given to the Leader of the Opposition that any agreement that was made subsequent to his own, and which was an improvement on his own, would be made available to this State.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: And the Imperial Government were quite willing to do that.

The PREMIER: Yes. When I requested the Agent General to get an assent to that apparently the Home Government communicated with the Federal Government as to his activities. Subsequently I received a wire from the Federal Prime Minister asking me to call off Mr. Colebatch.

Mr. Taylor: Pull off your dogs.

The PREMIER: The Prime Minister, I take it, felt that it was rather hampering him in connection with the negotiations for a final settlement.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They practically agreed that we would get the better terms before I left office.

The PREMIER: That is so, and the British Government are not questioning that now. The reason why we have not been able to get the better terms, is that the Commonwealth Government have been negotiating during the past eight or nine months, and naturally the Home authorities find it difficult to negotiate with two separate parties at one time in relation to a particular agreement.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They must finalise something.

The PREMIER: They should be able to finalise, but that is where the matter stands at the present time. However, we have placed on the Loan Estimates a sum of £95,000 for roads. It is hoped, if the Main Roads Bill be passed, that a considerable improvement will be made in the condition of our roads during the present and succeeding years. In addition, £22,000 has been provided for roads to serve group settlements in the South-West. That amount is independent of any assistance we may receive from the Commonwealth Government. A further £23,000 is provided for roads in other districts. For public buildings we provide £87,000. That is a fairly large sum, but it does not nearly meet all requirements. I have had much difficulty in finding money required for public buildings, mainly for schools in group settlement districts, hospitals, and buildings of that description.

Mr. Taylor: Is that amount for new buildings and upkeep?

The PREMIER: Mainly for new buildings, such as schools and hospitals in new districts. It includes some provision for upkeep as well. Regarding the North-West, that part of the State, as I have said on former occasions, requires special treatment. Although I have provided in various ways for works that are required I confess that the amounts set out in the Estimates do not represent anything like the money that I could wish to see made available. In the circumstances, it is all that I can do. I feel now as I have felt for years past, that there is an obligation devolving upon the Commonwealth Government to assist Western Australia financially in the development of that portion of our territory. It is almost beyond the financial powers of this State to provide for the necessary developmental works in the North-West and, at the same time, to find the money required for railway construction, harbour construction, land settlement, and work necessary in other directions in the more closely settled portions of the State.

Mr. Teesdale: You could lose the whole vote altogether.

The PREMIER: Yes, the whole lot. The few scores of thousands provided in the Estimates represent merely a drop of water in the ocean.

Mr. Teesdale: That is so.

The PREMIER: But it cannot be helped. I discussed this question with Senator

Pearce a few days ago when he brought forward certain proposals that he thought might be of advantage to the Commonwealth and to this State regarding the control and development of the North-West. These proposals have not reached the practical stage yet. They are merely suggestions and ideas that he had upon the subject and possibly represented matters he had discussed with his colleagues in the Federal Cabinet.

Mr. Teesdale: Perhaps you could arrange a trip through the North-West!

The PREMIER: That might be done. I expressed my opinion definitely to Senator Pearce that it was the duty of the Federal Government to assist us in the development of the North-West, just as they have been finding money for the development of the Northern Territory for many years past. Whether the Federal Government realise this or not, I do not know, but certainly I do not see much hope of the State affording any considerable financial assistance to the North-West for some years to come. That is about all I have to say on the Loan Estimates. I am largely governed by commitments from last year, every one of which I believe to be justifiable. Money is difficult to obtain at the present time. The local loan of ten million pounds placed on the market recently by the Commonwealth Government on behalf of the States was barely subscribed. I believe the Commonwealth Government will require to raise a loan of £70,000,000 next year for conversion purposes alone. Money can be borrowed in England at the present time at a lower rate than it is obtainable in Western Australia, but there are still difficulties regarding exchange affecting the cost of transferring money to Western Australia. A Loan Bill will be brought down during the next few days. It will be necessary to go upon the market next year. Authority is necessary to raise the money required for the works set out in the Loan Estimates. We hope the financial position will improve, but certainly there is no indication of it now. The bank rate of interest increased by one-half per cent. last week. I noticed in the Commonwealth banking figures that the interest had been increased from 6½ per cent. to 7 per cent. It is most unfortunate for us that we are right in the middle of our developmental policy that necessitates the expenditure of large sums of money, at a time when money itself is so dear. There is no help for it, but to go on and I hope, taking all these things into consideration, that the amount involved in the Estimates will not be regarded as excessive.

Progress reported.

BILL—PLANT DISEASES ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—TRANSFER OF LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Order of the Day read for the resumption of the debate from 3rd December.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

Mr. Lutey in the Chair; the Minister for Justice in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Offices of Commissioner and Registrar of Titles may be held by one person:

Mr. DAVY: The Minister agreed to the adjournment of the second reading debate in order that certain representations concerning the Bill might be made to him by members of the legal profession. The Minister received a deputation this morning, and a satisfactory understanding was arrived at upon the point at issue. That enables members on this side of the House to withdraw their opposition to the Bill. We do not find fault with it at all.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not know why the Bill has been introduced, because the work has been done expeditiously and thoroughly well for years past. The men engaged upon the work were well trained. The Minister intends to take a man who has not been trained and place him in charge of these officers.

The Minister for Justice: No.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: In the days of Dr. Smith, the law was as is proposed now. Now the Minister again proposes to saddle the country with more expense.

The Minister for Justice: No, with less expense.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: And he will secure neither greater efficiency nor greater despatch in the business. The officers who have been working for years will lose their opportunities for promotion and someone outside will be appointed to the position.

The Minister for Justice: That is not so.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am sorry the Minister has thought it necessary to consult legal gentlemen regarding the Bill.

The Minister for Justice: They consulted me!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister has a profound respect for the legal profession.

The Minister for Justice: As the head of the profession, naturally I would have respect for them.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister has said often that the lawyers' union is a close preserve, and I suppose it is his sympathy with unionists that prompts him

in reaching his decision. I ask the Minister to explain what advantage will be derived from this change. It will cost a lot of money and will be of advantage to no one, while the officers concerned will lose their opportunities of promotion.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: When I introduced the Bill I made the position quite clear. I stated that the alteration of the system would result in considerable convenience. If the hon. member does not choose to listen to me I will not proceed with my explanation.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—MAIN ROADS.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 3rd December; Mr. Lutey in the Chair, the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

Clause 4—Main Roads Advisory Board (partly considered):

Mr. SAMPSON: Since the Bill was last before the Committee it has received the consideration of the Metropolitan Local Authorities Association, which body endorsed the decision previously arrived at in respect of the personnel of the board. The association are of the opinion that three members would be better than five.

The CHAIRMAN: The question has already been disposed of, and we cannot go back to it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Will the Minister explain how it is proposed that the local authorities shall elect their representative? The Minister intends to frame regulations to govern the election of two members, one representing the road boards and the other the municipalities. How are these representatives to be elected?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have not yet any fixed idea on that subject. I will give an undertaking that I will confer with the Local Governing Bodies Association. I had in mind the idea of following the method of election adopted in connection with the Fire Brigades Board. I want the representatives to be elected to meet with the entire approval of the local authorities; my desire is to meet their wishes.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: These two members will represent the people who will find the cash; the other representatives will be official. What I complain about is that the Bill is not so much a main roads Bill as a departmental Bill, and the only safeguard the taxpayers will have will be the two unofficial members. Therefore all the local bodies concerned should have a vote.

The Minister for Works: You surely do not doubt that for one moment.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Then why did not the Minister say so? Does the Minister intend that all the people who are taxed shall be represented in making these two appointments, or is it proposed that these two members of the board will represent only those districts in which money will be expended?

Mr. SAMPSON: It should be made clear whether the nominations by the local authorities will be limited to road boards and municipal councils that are in the prescribed area affected by the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have no hesitation in giving an assurance on the two points raised. The Bill is quite clear. It is obvious that it will be only those local authorities within the prescribed area that will have a say in the appointment of the two outside representatives. Whatever scheme is arrived at for the appointment of the representatives of the local authorities, it will certainly be by vote.

Mr. Latham: One vote each?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have not any fixed idea as to the method of election, but I have already said that it will probably be similar to that adopted in connection with appointments made to the Fire Brigades Board. If I am any judge there is not much hope of any metropolitan local body having a representative on the board, because they have not yet been able to appoint anyone to the Fire Brigades Board. The precedent for law-making by regulation was set by the present Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: More legislation by regulation was done during the hon. gentleman's time than ever before.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You have to get the board before the districts are declared.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That may be. The board may not be complete until the districts have been declared. Otherwise, a temporary board could be appointed pending the declaration of districts. Such things have frequently been done. The whole question was discussed on the issue of the board, and I hope we shall not have that discussion again.

Mr. SAMPSON: If the Minister refers to Clause 12, he will learn that he will be in difficulties regarding the appointment of the board. That clause sets out that the Governor may, on the recommendation of the board, declare by proclamation that any road shall be a main road. Therefore, until the board has been constituted, a main road can hardly be proclaimed. Since the declaration of main roads depends on the board, there would seem to be an impasse. I suppose the difficulty can be got over in some way.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Whenever the Minister is in a tight fix, he says, "Well, you did it."

The CHAIRMAN: We are dealing with this clause.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If the Minister is allowed to refer to past legislation, I must be allowed to refer to it, too. We cannot have differential treatment. Let the Minister produce any provision similar to this. There is to be no election under this Bill, but there is to be appointment. The Minister will give the local people power to make the appointments; that is how it will be done. The people who appoint the two representatives should be the people who will pay the bill.

The Minister for Works: So they will be.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not think so.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 5—Term of office:

Mr. SAMPSON: I consider that in Subclause 1 of this clause the words "the Chief Engineer" should be deleted. I recognise that such an amendment would have some reference to the question which has already been before the Committee. However, I hope the Committee may see their way to retrace their steps in regard to the appointment of the board.

The Minister for Works: You had your debate on that question the other night, and now you want to get it all in again. That is most unfair.

Mr. SAMPSON: Since the House met, the Metropolitan Local Authorities' Organisation have met, and have carried a resolution.

The Minister for Lands: They met long before that matter was discussed.

Mr. LATHAM: I move an amendment—

That in Subclause 1, line 2, the word "appointed" be struck out, and "elected" inserted in lieu.

The CHAIRMAN: I have to point out that in Subclause 2 of the preceding clause the word "appointed" already appears.

Mr. LATHAM: Then I shall ask for a recommitment of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: I rule the amendment out of order.

Mr. SAMPSON: The Minister has said that the members of the board are to be elected, and in that connection has referred to the Fire Brigades Board, which is elective. It would be better to recommit the preceding clause than to make the Minister wrong.

The CHAIRMAN: This is not the time to recommit. Possibly the Minister may recommit at a later stage.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am not concerned whether the word is "appointed" or "elected," because the Minister has said that he will appoint on the recommendation of the local authorities. But what does he propose to do under the authority given to him by Subclause 2 of Clause 4? Of course he can appoint the

Government officials who are to be members of the board, and provide for substitutes in the absence of those official members; but I see no provision for the filling of vacancies in the case of the other members.

The Minister for Works: That is all provided for.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No. It will be impossible for the Minister to carry on until a vacancy has been filled.

Mr. SAMPSON: I move an amendment—

That in Subclause 3 the words "who is an officer of the Public Service" be struck out.

It is quite possible that there will be an absence of a member of the board who is not an officer of the Public Service. In the circumstances the Minister might agree to the deletion of those words.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. SAMPSON: The subclause might be inconvenient if a member of the board, not being an officer of the Public Service, were out of the State for a few weeks.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 6—Defects in appointment not to invalidate proceedings of the board:

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The marginal note scarcely describes the clause. Subclause 1 deals with the number of members of the board, not with their appointment. Moreover, the clause says that whatever is done by the board is right.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is really to get over technicalities in the appointment of the board. The clause provides that defects in appointment shall not invalidate the proceedings.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: This is a most extraordinary provision. The power the Minister wants is in Subclause 2. Subclause 1 provides that the board need not be complete, need not be a board at all. Moreover, it is not right that, no matter what the board does, it shall be valid. I move an amendment—

That Subclause 1 be struck out.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 7 and 8—agreed to.

Clause 9—Minister to be a body corporate:

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: This is the clause that makes the Minister all powerful. I warn the Treasurer that the Minister will sit over him in respect of this board.

The Premier: I will see that he does not.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Under the clause the Minister for Works will con-

trol all finance. The Treasurer will not be consulted when Government money is appropriated for the clearing of feeder roads. It is truly extraordinary legislation. The House will not have control over the finances in any way.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: Will not the money be voted for the purposes?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The House will have no real control. The Minister will be the board.

The Premier: He cannot do anything without the consent of the board.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The board cannot do anything without the consent of the Minister. The fund will be controlled without reference to the Treasurer. In that it will be unique.

The Premier: Not unique. The same may be said of the Mining Development Vote.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Treasurer should hold the purse strings.

Mr. Panton: What is the use of that when there is nothing in the purse?

Hon. W. D. Johnson: What do you suggest; that we strike out "Minister for Works" and insert "Treasurer"?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If the hon. member agrees that it is right that Parliament should cease to control public funds, he will find no fault with the clause. The clause is unusual because it accepts the Minister for Works as the Treasurer. The Minister will control everything connected with the board. So, if the House votes £100,000 for feeder roads, the Minister for Works will disburse that money without consulting the Treasurer. I hope the Committee will not give these powers to the Minister. Parliament ought to retain its control over all finance. This is one of the vital clauses in the Bill. If it pass, the Committee will be delegating to the Minister for Works the right to do as he pleases. I will vote against the clause.

Mr. SAMPSON: Various bodies have asked that the word "Minister" be struck out with the object of making the board a body corporate under the Act. That would give effect to the statement frequently made by the Minister that the board has power; that it is not controlled by the Minister, and is not a departmental board. I move an amendment—

That the word "Minister" be struck out and "board" inserted in lieu.

The PREMIER: The Leader of the Opposition has complained that the clause will take away from the Treasurer the control of expenditure and place it in the hands of the Minister for Works. Now, his colleague, the member for Swan, proposes to go further. He wishes to take control from the Minister, who is subject to the control of Parliament, and place the control of the whole of the funds in the hands of the board, which would not be responsible to

this House. Here is dissention in the front ranks of the Opposition.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We are free men.

The PREMIER: The Leader of the Opposition cannot possibly vote for the amendment.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Wait and see.

The PREMIER: Not with any degree of consistency, because the amendment goes further than does the clause. There is nothing unusual about the clause. The House votes money to a Minister, and he has power to and does expend the money without reference to the Treasurer. I instance the vote for buildings; the Minister for Works spends that in the manner he thinks best and without reference to the Treasurer. If a Minister is not to be entrusted to expend money voted to him by Parliament, he is not fit to be a Minister. No Treasurer could possibly supervise the expenditure of all the votes. He must trust his Ministers. There are other votes for roads and bridges that the Minister in charge of the department disposes of as he thinks best. Parliament is not losing control of the purse inasmuch as the Minister is responsible to Parliament. He has to get a vote from Parliament before he can spend anything. If he spends it unwisely, he is responsible to Parliament for his action. This clause is consistent with the attitude that has always been adopted. The member for Swan would give to Government officials power greater than he would give to the Minister. That would be an absolute negation of Parliamentary control.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: When the House votes money on the Estimates, it is granted to the Treasurer and has to be spent through the Treasurer. Each month the Treasurer approves of the amount of money Ministers may spend. If the board were merely collecting special taxes as under the traffic measure and the land tax, it would be a different matter, but it is quite another matter when the board, as agent for the Government, is to do a great deal of work that the Government now do. As to the amendment—

The Premier: You will not support that.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am not to be drawn. I want to hear what the Minister for Works has to say. When he faces Mr. Tom Walsh he is very courageous, but when he comes here, he is quite the reverse.

The Minister for Works: You cannot stir up my Scotch blood.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The "Minister" proposal is bad; the "board" proposal is a thousand times worse. It would be a board of the Minister's nominees to do the Minister's bidding.

Mr. SAMPSON: When the Minister insisted upon a board of five, he did much to injure the usefulness of the Bill. Earlier in the day the Premier spoke of boards in the Eastern States, and I thought he regarded them rather favourably.

The Premier: They are different boards.

Mr. SAMPSON: But surely the principle remains the same! The Minister has said this board is to have executive powers. But where? The words are fair, but the Bill is definite. The Minister has said he does not wish to be approached on every matter that will arise under this measure.

The Minister for Works: I shall take care I am not.

Mr. SAMPSON: Yet the Minister is providing that he will be.

Mr. C. P. WANSBROUGH: I cannot see the force of the Premier's objection. We are only asking that the facilities enjoyed by the local governing bodies be granted to the board. I hope the local governing bodies will have sufficient representation on the board. It is only fair that the people who find the money should have a voice in the spending of it, and that it should not be wholly and solely under the control of the Minister.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This is really a repetition of the discussion we had last week. The amendment really means that the board shall be the constructing authority, which in turn involves a duplication of staff and of control. The Committee resolved that question the other night. The point raised by the member for Beverley is not affected. The local governing bodies will have two direct representatives on the board. Last week we agreed to clear up the whole issue by having one discussion covering all phases of it, and now the member for Swan has brought it up again in this guise.

Mr. Angelo: You have the spending of the money.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: On the recommendation of the board. We have sufficient duplication in the Public Service of the State already without creating a still further duplication. We want to save expense to the taxpayer.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You do not let the road boards carry out the work when they can.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Whenever a road board can do a job it is given to it to do, but the hon. member would not let the road boards do the work.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Nothing of the sort. I said they ought to do it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have decentralised the whole control under the local authorities for Mullewa to Esperance. That is the policy I propose to follow. If this amendment is carried many of the clauses we have passed would have to be redrafted.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There is plenty of time.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I suppose there is for some members, but I am pretty tired to-night.

Mr. SAMPSON: I give the statement of the Minister with regard to restrictions

placed by the previous Government upon the use of money by road boards an absolute denial. He ought to withdraw the statement. Take the Welshpool road, for instance.

The CHAIRMAN: I cannot allow the hon. member to refer to the Welshpool road. The Minister made no reference to it.

Mr. SAMPSON: Various Governments have found money that has been spent by the local authorities. The Minister should withdraw the statement that a previous Government restricted local authorities in their expenditure. It is not true.

The Premier: Let us get on.

Mr. SAMPSON: No one on this side would reflect upon the Government, and the Minister should not knowingly reflect upon the previous Government.

The Premier: It would be quite in order to do so.

Mr. SAMPSON: The Minister should withdraw the statement now he has been told it is wrong.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member should have asked for a withdrawal at the time. It is too late to do so now.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I cannot see the value of the amendment. Under the Road Boards Act the Minister controls everything.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 10—Payment of engineers and inspectors:

Mr. SAMPSON: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 after "Governor" the words "on the recommendation of the board" be inserted.

This amendment will at least acknowledge the existence of the board.

The PREMIER: The amendment is out of order. We cannot insert in an Act of Parliament that the Governor shall do anything on a recommendation. The proper phraseology is that the Governor may do a thing.

Mr. J. H. Smith: If the word "Minister" were substituted for "Governor" the difficulty would be overcome.

The CHAIRMAN: I take it the Governor and the Minister are the same in this case.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 11—Engineer and inspectors to be subject to control of Minister:

Mr. SAMPSON: I have an amendment to move here.

The Minister for Works: What is the good of all this stone-walling? I will report progress.

The Premier: You will get no money for roads from me. These tinpot amendments will not make a better Bill.

Mr. Marshall: Kick it overboard; why bother about it?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We will do what we think fit on this side of the House. Progress reported.

BILL—FAIR RENTS.

In Committee.

Mr. Lutey in the Chair; the Minister for Justice in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Interpretation:

Mr. DAVY: Under this interpretation every imaginable kind of building can be brought under the Bill. The Bill is bad in principle, but it will become worse if we endeavour to include within its scope shops, warehouses, factories, etc. In New South Wales the Government have confined their Act to dwelling houses of a certain rental value, the lease of which does not exceed three years. There is also exemption in the case of dwelling houses ordinarily leased for summer residence. There should be some restriction in this case. It was argued the other evening that the reason for high rents in the metropolitan area was the shortage of houses. I suggest that that position is not controlled by the law of supply and demand, but by the same kind of law that enables the painter of a picture to get his own price because he happens to be popular. The only way to prevent high rents in the centre of the city, and to prevent increased capital values of the properties there, would be to place a cordon of police around the area and prevent the people from going there. As the population increases, so must values and rents increase. If there was a wave of popularity in favour of some other portion of the city, and the people went there, the values of property, together with the rents to be paid, would increase correspondingly, while those in the centre of the city would correspondingly decrease. The Minister will never be able to achieve his object in endeavouring to keep down rents by way of this legislation. The position was recognised by the British and New South Wales Governments who confined their legislation to a particular kind of dwelling houses. I do not know whether it is any use asking the Minister to agree to an amendment because he is determined to get his Bill through as it stands. However, I move an amendment—

That paragraphs (b) and (c) be struck out.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: If there is one class of rack renting that it is necessary to restrict, it is that applied to shops, warehouses, factories, offices, and stores, etc. I invited the Leader of the Opposition to walk around what is known as "the block" in the city to ascertain for himself the position regarding rents. In the

majority of cases he would find that the landlords have taken advantage of the fact that they are in a position to inordinately, unfairly and without any discrimination raise rents beyond a point that is fair and just. There is a demand for the Bill and the greatest demand is from the people who are tenants of these shops and offices. I gave instances when introducing the Bill and when replying to the debate, which showed what had occurred in this area. I have letters explaining what has happened. There was one lease in connection with which the rent went up 100 per cent. when it was renewed.

Mr. Davy: Are you referring to the case of Mr. Snigg?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: That is one instance.

Mr. Davy: You might ascertain the inner history of that case.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It could be quoted to show what has happened.

Mr. Latham: The Commonwealth Government raised the rents for their properties and secured tenants every time.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: That does not show it was right.

The Premier: People must pay the rents if they desire to get the shops.

Mr. Latham: The tenants would not agree to pay more than they thought fit.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The tenants take the shops and pay for a while until they become insolvent. The trouble is, however, that while they pay, other landlords make that an excuse for raising rents. The rent of a billiard room in Murray-street was raised to £5 a week. The man endeavoured to pay it but went insolvent. In the meantime owners of other billiard saloons, ascertaining the fact that such a rent was being paid, increased the rents of their rooms from £2 to £4. One man in another instance has to pay £20 a week for his premises, and because of such rentals landlords have increased their rents by 100 per cent. In some instances the landlords have said, "I am not a Shylock like the other fellow; I will not increase your rent by 100 per cent., but another 25 per cent. or 40 per cent. will not hurt you." That is the sort of thing that is going on. I do not want to read the letters that I have received.

Mr. Latham: Do you intend to restrict this provision to other than places at the seaside held for summer residence only?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: If the hon. member thinks those places should be excluded, I will agree.

Mr. J. H. Smith: And those at other holiday resorts as well.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: That was not the attitude of the member for West Perth, and in any case that matter can be dealt with under another clause.

There is certainly necessity for rent restriction in connection with business premises and shops, and the Committee would not be justified in agreeing to the amendment.

Mr. DAVY: The Minister misses the main principle. A rise in rents in the middle of the city is necessary for its development. It is part of the means by which the city will spread. Shopkeepers naturally desire to establish themselves where the greatest returns can be secured. If the rents are kept low artificially, there will be no incentive for business people to go out into the suburbs and there will be no tendency for the city to spread. Most landlords would desire to secure the highest rent possible, for that is only human nature. It is not right to call them robbers.

The Minister for Justice: In some instances no other term could be properly applied to them.

Mr. DAVY: If the Minister had money to invest, he would place it where he could secure the highest rate of interest upon good securities.

The Minister for Justice: That is a different thing altogether.

Mr. DAVY: There is no difference at all whether I invest in one form of property or another. If there is an inducement for business people to spread their operations into the outer areas where rents will be lower, then goods will be disposed of at cheaper rates than is possible in the heart of the city. Naturally shopkeepers would like to establish themselves in premises in Hay-street, Murray-street or Barrack-street.

Mr. Pantou: Where the people go.

Mr. DAVY: That is natural. The Commonwealth Government let the shops they bought and later constructed a beautiful General Post Office and a fine street through from Wellington-street to Murray-street. That enhanced the capital value of the shops in the vicinity immediately.

The Minister for Justice: That is one instance where the people got something back by reason of the enhanced value, but other people have also taken advantage of it.

Mr. DAVY: And that is perfectly natural and proper. The Minister talks about sudden rises in rents. I have had quoted to me by reputable land agents, who furnished me with names and dates, that there are many instances where tenants are enjoying the benefits of long leases of premises on which they pay not more than 4 per cent. of the capital value of the premises they occupy. When their leases run out naturally they will have to pay twice as much in rent. The tenants have enjoyed their long leases over considerable periods and have secured the advantage of their gamble. When they are called upon to pay the standard rents, it certainly looks horrible.

Mr. Marshall: The Bill will not make any difference; if they had not secured their leases they would have had to pay increased rents long ago.

Mr. DAVY: I do not follow the hon. member.

The PREMIER: I am not able to follow the argument of the member for West Perth that high rents in the city, the higher the better—

Mr. Davy: That is not so.

The PREMIER: —the more beneficial it will be because it will have the effect of driving people out of the centre of the city and, as he said, spread the business area. Whether rents are high or low in the city, how can it make any difference to the number of shops that will be within the city boundary? The number in the city is governed by the space, and not by the rent charged. It does not matter whether the rent be 2 per cent. or 200 per cent. on the capital invested, people will occupy shops in the city where space will permit, no matter whether the rents be high or low. If they go out, someone else will come in and take the shops, and so the premises will be occupied irrespective of the rent charged. If a landlord is obtaining, say, 10 per cent. or 20 per cent on the money invested in the property, and the lease of his tenant expires and he doubles the rent, which happens in many instances—

Mr. Latham: No.

The PREMIER: Yes. I know of cases where owners of property are getting as much as 50 per cent. And this is extorted simply because the property is where people desire to carry on business. Thus the landlord is able to take advantage of the people's necessities. That kind of thing is contrary to all our laws. We impose restrictions upon people and tell them that they shall be permitted to do only what is fair to the rest of the community. So it should be in respect of rents. What I have just stated is nothing but barefaced exploitation. The owners of these properties have contributed nothing to the increased value; that is due to the work and activity of the general public and the expenditure of public funds. It has nothing to do with the work or the energy or money expended by the owner beyond the original capital he invested. When Forrest Place was opened rents in that vicinity went up 50 per cent. That was due to the opening up of a new thoroughfare. What did the landlords contribute in that case? Nothing. The community has to pay. The shopkeeper passes on the high rent to the consumers—the purchasers of his goods. There is much greater need to restrict the greed of the landlords who own business premises than the greed of those who own private houses.

Mr. Latham: Do you think that if we reduced rents we would get things any cheaper.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: I think so.

Mr. Latham: I do not.

The PREMIER: The hon. member repeatedly stated that the high cost of farming and production is due to high wages. He has always argued that.

Mr. Latham: No.

The PREMIER: The hon. member has said that if wages were lower prices would be lower. Therefore, by parity of reasoning if rents were reduced, so would the cost of goods be reduced. If the hon. member argues that rents have no bearing on costs, he destroys the whole fabric of the economic system that he himself stands for.

Mr. Latham: I say prices will not be reduced.

The PREMIER: Then he destroys further the law of supply and demand that he stands for. If I occupy a shop and the rent of that shop is reduced, it will follow that rents all round me will be reduced, and if I reduce the price of the goods I am selling, will not the man next door also reduce the price of his? If he does not, the law of supply and demand will not operate.

Mr. Latham: Of course you do not know of the existence of such institutions as Chambers of Commerce.

The PREMIER: The hon. member declares that the law of supply and demand, and competition do not exist, that prices are fixed by a combine and a monopoly. Now the hon. member agrees with me.

Mr. Latham: I say it breaks down your argument.

The PREMIER: The hon. member admits that the contention we have put forward for many years that if competition does not exist, the law of supply and demand does not exist, that prices are fixed by combines and monopolies irrespective of the cost of the article. The Bill is essential. An individual has no right to extract 20 and 30 and as much as 50 per cent. interest on the capital invested, just because he happens to own a shop or a business place in the city, the increased value of which is not the result of the display of any of his own energies. It is barefaced exploitation that when a lease is up an owner should be able to approach the tenant who has built up a decent connection around him and demand from that tenant perhaps double the rent he had been accustomed to paying. If the rent that was being obtained before the expiration of the lease was a fair return on the capital invested, why should the owner be permitted to double that rent and double his return on the capital invested. Not only that but it has happened that landlords, at the expiration of a lease, have demanded and obtained a sum of money as a condition of the granting of a further lease for the goodwill built up. It is absolutely essential that we should check these people just as we check and restrict those who unduly oppress their fellow men in other walks of life.

Mr. DAVY: I have no desire to enter into a controversy with the Premier, and I am perfectly conscious of the fact that I am not able to compete with him in an argument. The Premier stated that the increase in value was due to the community as a whole. I agree that that is so, and in very rare cases do we find it to be due to anything else. If that be the case I cannot understand what the Premier means when he talks about a goodwill that has been built up. A person takes a shop, perhaps years ago; the population increases in number, and people get into the habit of going along that street where the shop is. The goodwill the Premier speaks about is something that has come along owing to the efforts of the general public.

The Premier: I did not say in every case, but in many cases where there are isolated shops.

Mr. DAVY: A man like Anthony Hordern, in Sydney, takes a huge risk by starting a department store away from the recognised shopping centre. He creates the increased value of his land; but, generally, enhancement of land values is due almost entirely to the public as a whole. I can understand the point of view of the man who says that the unearned increment should belong to the community as a whole, as contended by Henry George. But instead of taking that increased value from the owner of the land and giving it to the community as a whole, this Bill proposes to take it from one individual, the landlord, and give it to another individual, the tenant. The Premier says the tenant will give it to the public. But the tenant will not charge the public lower prices because of a certain reduction in his rent. Isolated reductions of rent cannot reduce prices. There are always efforts by combines to fix prices, but because of other competition invariably coming in they are never quite successful.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: They are never quite unsuccessful.

Mr. DAVY: Endeavours have been made from time to time to fix prices in this city, but there are always a few outlaws who refuse to come in, and that keeps down the price.

The Premier: And the others try to bring the outlaw into line by cutting off his supplies.

Mr. DAVY: I agree that a general lowering of rents would result in reduction of prices. It would be immoral to take away the enhanced value of land from the landlord and give it to the tenant. There is nothing in this Bill to prevent a tenant who has obtained a lease from assigning that lease to another person for a consideration.

The Minister for Justice: Yes, there is.

Mr. DAVY: No law can be passed which will prevent such a transaction. A limit exists to the enforcement of laws.

Mr. Panton: That depends on how much one can afford to pay for one's defence.

Mr. DAVY: The interjection is irrelevant. It is bad legislation to pass a law which is obviously unenforceable.

Mr. HUGHES: The last speaker claims that if city rents are high, shopkeepers tend to go out into the suburbs. What actually obtains is an opportunity for the owners of suburban shops to raise their rents correspondingly. Suburban prices are regulated by city prices. We know the prices of goods have been increased solely because the rents of business premises have been raised. A man who had made £18,000 by selling boots and shoes to the wives and children of soldiers during the war, and who had also made money from other sources, was offered, after the war, for £32,000 a property which had cost £16,000, and which on that capitalisation was returning 12½ per cent. per annum. He bought the property for £32,000, and proceeded to raise the rents so that they would return 12½ per cent. per annum on that fancy price. If such a measure as this had been in force, he would not have given £32,000 for the £16,000 property, but would have put his money into buildings elsewhere, or into some business. Just as gold mines are salted, so have business premises been salted in Perth. The policy is to increase the rents so as to show a considerable rent roll. Capitalised profits are apt to be invested in bricks and mortar.

Mr. Davy: They won't if this Bill becomes law.

Mr. HUGHES: This Bill would prevent that kind of thing being done.

Mr. Davy: That is our chief objection to it.

Mr. HUGHES: An investor wanting to convert his spoils into bricks and mortar, and seeing the opportunity to obtain a return of 12½ per cent., invests his money accordingly. Then he goes to the tenants and says, "I am entitled to 10 per cent. or 12 per cent." Only the week before last there was a big deal in Murray-street property, the purchaser being a lady. She went to the tenants and told them there was no occasion for alarm, that she was going to raise the rents but once. Thereupon she increased them by 50 per cent. After that she had no difficulty in selling the property to a clergyman on the strength of the salted rent-roll. In all these cases the idea is to put up the rent-roll and then sell the property at double its value. Every one of these deals takes an additional toll from the general community. If we do not have a rent restriction Act, in 25 years' time the premises at the corner of Barrack and Wellington-streets that were sold for £32,000 will be sold for £64,000.

[Mr. Panton took the Chair.]

Mr. Davy: They will be worth it by that time.

Mr. Latham: Else it will be a bad look out for the city.

Mr. HUGHES: If those premises are sold for £64,000 the incoming landlord will require 12 per cent. on his money.

Mr. Davy: But you want to make a present to the tenants.

Mr. HUGHES: No, the benefit will extend to the consumer of commodities sold in the shops. Invariably an increased rental means a rise in the price of commodities.

Mr. Davy: An increased turnover allows the rent to be raised without any increase in the price of commodities.

Mr. HUGHES: I know of a three-storied building in Perth the rental of which was £40 per week. The tenant used to sell a cup of tea and a piece of cake for 9d., but the landlord raised the rent to £45, after which, had the tenant continued to sell at 9d. he would not have had a penny for himself. I know many other such instances. If the members for West Perth and for York are satisfied that a restriction of the rent of business premises will not make any difference to the consumer, what does it matter? Why not let reduced rents have a trial? To take the clause out of the Bill would be to destroy the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Why should the member for West Perth want to exempt owners of business premises from the operations of the Bill while satisfied to allow suburban landlords to be brought within the scope of the measure? In my view city business premises should be especially subject to the Bill. I hope the Committee will agree to the clause.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. HUGHES: I move an amendment—

That paragraph (a) be struck out.

I cannot see why licensed premises for the sale of intoxicating liquor should be exempt from the Bill. Rents charged for licensed premises are always excessive. Why should the landlord of licensed premises be privileged to charge excessive rents because those premises are licensed? He takes no responsibility.

The Premier: Look at the responsibility he takes owing to a prohibition poll.

Mr. HUGHES: But he would still have his premises; it would be the licensee that would go out. The great bulk of the hotels, if deprived of their licenses, would earn 8 per cent. The licensee takes all the responsibility. The landlord has no responsibility for any breach of the licensing laws.

Mr. Mann: The landlord might suffer from the loss of the license.

Mr. HUGHES: Can the hon. member mention any hotel that had to give up the trade because of a license being refused? What happens is that the license is transferred. It may be contended that my amendment would make no difference to consumers. I am not concerned about that. We may have two landlords side by side, the one restricted to 8 per cent. because his

premises are occupied by a trader, and another landlord allowed to charge what he likes, because his premises are licensed. The amendment would make the law equitable.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: There is always a possibility of prohibition and of the licensing bench imposing restrictions and ordering extensive alterations and improvements. That makes licensed premises entirely different from the average business premises.

Mr. Mann: The Health Department may do the same in regard to other buildings.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: But they do not do it to the extent that the licensing bench do. The other day the bench ordered the installation of running water for the washing of glasses. That might cost a considerable amount. The bar accommodation and sanitary arrangements are always subject to alteration, and the cost affects the landlord. I am not particularly wedded to the proposal, but in all the circumstances I think it is fair.

Mr. HUGHES: Subclause 3 of Clause 11 makes provision to cover substantial alterations.

The Minister for Justice: Those would not be substantial alterations.

Mr. HUGHES: In some instances the licensing bench have ordered substantial alterations. If only petty alterations were ordered, the landlord would not be greatly affected. The licensing bench have gone so far as to condemn a building and instruct the licensee that, unless new premises were provided, the license would not be renewed. When the new building is erected, the landlord will be entitled to charge on the cost of the new building. The provision of a spray to wash glasses could not be regarded as a substantial alteration.

Mr. North: Do not forget the fly doors.

Mr. HUGHES: If they represented a substantial alteration, the landlord would be entitled to consideration. I suppose an hotel would require half-a-dozen fly doors at a cost of 30s. or 35s. each. I regret that the risks of prohibition are not great. Other traders run equal risks, due solely to changing fashions. The licensee of a suburban hotel had a five years' lease, and the business was mainly Sunday traffic. When the Act was amended this hotel was within the dry area, and no liquor could be sold on Sunday. His turnover was reduced by 50 per cent., and the landlord refused to grant any rebate of rent.

The Minister for Justice: He will drop his rent next time.

Mr. HUGHES: In the meantime the landlord is insisting on the same rent that was agreed to before the law was amended.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: When the nine to nine provision came in the rents were reduced proportionately.

Mr. HUGHES: The licensing board should have been given power to adjust the rents on a reduction in the turnover.

Mr. Davy: The licenses reduction board can do that.

Mr. HUGHES: It has no power to reassess in this case. The risk now attaches to the licensee and not to the landlord. This answers the contention of the Minister. There should be no distinction between lands.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. DAVY: Will this Bill refer to furnished rooms in an apartment house, and would a flat in a building be included?

The Minister for Justice: Yes.

Mr. DAVY: What is the difference between a man who has two rooms in a hostel and one who has five rooms in a block of flats?

The Minister for Justice: There is no distinction. All are provided for in Clause 9. The court would determine the fair rent for the whole building.

Mr. DAVY: If I hire a room in a hostel or in a private house am I entitled to go to the court and have the rent determined?

The Minister for Justice: If you think it is of sufficient importance you can do so.

Mr. DAVY: A man might occupy a room and the landlord desire to get rid of him. The tenant, however, could apply to the court and the landlord could not remove him for some months. The position might be intolerable to the owner of the building.

The Minister for Justice: The people will have to see that their conduct is not objectionable.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—Application of Act:

Mr. MANN: I move an amendment—

That in Subclause 1, line 2, the words "before or" be struck out.

My object is to prevent the Bill from having retrospective effect.

The Minister for Justice: If you make a lease to-day for 10 years you must come within the provisions of the Bill.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Why cannot you let people look after themselves? Business people can.

Mr. MANN: Will this Bill apply to a lease made prior to its becoming law?

The Minister for Justice: Yes.

Mr. MANN: Tenants may have taken premises at a fixed rent, and have entered into competition with other trades. They will have estimated their working expenses and overhead charges including the cost of the rent. They know the margin on which they can trade in competition with others. The Minister now says that the landlord may apply to have their rent raised at any time. Some traders recently came from the goldfields and opened in Perth in cut lines. They are trading on about 2½ per cent.

and their 30 days' discount. They have fixed their profits on the rent they estimated they would have to pay on an extended lease.

The Minister for Justice: Read the proviso at the end of Clause 8.

Mr. MANN: It is Clause 5 that places them at so great a disadvantage. Clause 5 will enable the owner of property to go to the court and apply for an increase in the rent charged to his tenant because the man next door has paid twice the rent that owner is receiving.

Mr. Hughes: Do you know of any business people who are receiving a return of less than eight per cent?

Mr. Davy: There are lots not getting a return of four per cent.

Mr. MANN: This provision is bad.

The Minister for Justice: Provision is made in a later clause to deal with the point you are raising.

Mr. MANN: An individual may have purchased a property on the basis of the value of the rents at the time of the purchase. He may have had to borrow money to complete that purchase. An application is made for the reduction of the rents he receives. What position will such a man be in in view of the Bill? The measure may have a good effect in isolated cases, but it will have a bad effect in many more cases. The Minister would be well advised to agree to the amendment.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: If a lease is made before the Act is proclaimed, and the words covered by the amendment are deleted, the conditions of the lease will be forced upon the tenants for the full currency of the lease. If we are to improve the conditions of tenants who are now paying extortionate rents, we will not be able to do so if the amendment be agreed to. This is the one thing we wish to avoid.

Hon. Sir James MITCHELL: Is there any special reason for this provision.

Mr. Hughes: I suppose 80 per cent. of the business premises in Hay-street are subject to a lease.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The member for Perth would not read the second proviso to Clause 8, which sets out that the fair annual rent of a building let for any period during the three years immediately preceding an application to the court shall be estimated at a rate not exceeding the average rate at which rent was payable during the period or periods for which the building was so let.

Mr. Davy: What is the good of giving the lessor the power to go to court? Is it because it looks nice?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: This is retrospective legislation with a vengeance. I have listened with a good deal of amusement to the Minister's endeavour to explain the need for helping business people to look after themselves. He has deserted the cottage holder to-night and turns his attention to business people. Business people know

what they are doing and are quite as capable of looking after themselves as is the Minister. Does the Minister intend to put an end to leases that have been entered into?

Mr. Hughes: Certainly, if they are against public policy.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Business people can be trusted to look after themselves.

The Minister for Justice: Some of them have to pay exorbitant rents at the point of a bayonet. They have to do that or get out.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I have not heard of any such instances.

The Minister for Justice: I have here a letter that will give you one instance and I have plenty more.

Mr. Treasdale: I can give you one or two if you are short.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not think it is right to cancel leases entered into between business people, who know their own job. The Bill proposes that the tenant and not the owner shall get all the benefit.

Mr. Hughes: We do not say that. We want to adjust the benefits equitably.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: You say that people are not capable of dealing with their own business.

The Minister for Justice: If a lease is bad we provide an opportunity to review it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: What has that to do with you or with this House?

The Minister for Justice: It has a lot to do with the people.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We shall soon have a Bill introduced to set aside all marriages. There is no pretence at helping the public, but the Minister simply sets out to interfere with people.

The Minister for Justice: Who are the public? Are not some of the lessees some of the public?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But there is no pretence to assist the public.

Mr. Hughes: That is the whole object of the Bill.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Surely the Minister is not serious in asking the Committee to agree to setting aside leases. It is bordering on the absurd.

The Minister for Justice: If they are unfair, they should be set aside; if they are fair, they will stand.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: There is merely a desire to interfere. There is no desire to do good.

The Minister for Justice: That is easy to say.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It is a dangerous thing to set aside an agreement. It is monstrous that people should not be allowed to have an agreement at all. If an individual can go to the Minister and induce him to set aside an agreement, then agreements may be made with the idea of having them upset. Surely that is a scandalous proposal.

Mr. Taylor: Yes, it is shocking.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I hope no member will cast a silent vote on the amendment.

Mr. Hughes: Is that an instruction to your side?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The hon. member is the only one in this House who responds to the whip. Those who sit on this side are free. I intend to oppose the clause.

The Premier: I do not think you are too keen on the Bill.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Bill is a huge joke.

Mr. DAVY: I am opposed to the clause because it will interfere with existing contracts, but still more opposed to it since the Minister disclosed to us that the lessors would have the right to go to the court and get their leases adjusted. That is nothing but camouflage. The view of members opposite is that any lease which provides for a lessee paying more than 8 per cent. is unjust and the lessee, therefore, should be permitted to have it reduced. I suggest that the opposite might reasonably apply.

Mr. Hughes: You did not declare yourself opposed to fair rents at the elections.

Mr. DAVY: The hon. member has a short memory, or perhaps does not care how he speaks.

The Minister for Justice: He was very busy in your electorate.

Mr. DAVY: I could have done without his help. I declared that I was against legislation of this kind and gave my reasons. I am not accustomed to blarneying to my constituents. What I said on the hustings I will stand to here. I protest that the Bill should be brought down with an apparent fairness that does not exist.

Amendment put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	14
Noes	22

Majority against .. 8

AYES.

Mr. Angelo	Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Brown	Mr. North
Mr. Davy	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Denton	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Taylor
Mr. E. B. Johnston	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Mann	Mr. Latham

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Lutey
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Collier	Mr. McCallum
Mr. Corbov	Mr. Millington
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Munster
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Heron	Mr. Troy
Mr. Hughes	Mr. A. Wansbrough
Mr. W. D. Johnson	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Kennedy	Mr. Withers
Mr. Lamond	Mr. Wilson

(Teller.)

PAIRS.

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Teesdale	Mr. Lambert
Mr. Maley	Mr. Clydesdale

[Mr. Lutey resumed the Chair.]

Mr. DAVY: I follow the New South Wales and English Acts, which were quoted by the Minister in introducing the Bill as part of his precedent for introducing it. Section 3 of the New South Wales Act restricts the scope within which the measure shall apply. I move an amendment—

That the following be added to Sub-clause 1:—"for any term not exceeding three years at a rent not exceeding £156, or a proportionate sum for a less period, or which at any time during a period of six months before the passing of this Act has been let at a rent not exceeding the above-mentioned amount: Provided that nothing herein contained shall apply to dwelling houses ordinarily leased for summer residence."

In Cottesloe and other seaside resorts, numerous women, mainly widows, eke out a somewhat precarious existence by letting rooms, or portions of their houses, during the summer months. They have an extremely short season, four or five months at the outside; and during that period they have to get a good deal more than 8 per cent. to make it worth their while.

Mr. Hughes: But they are not landlords; they are lodging-house keepers.

Mr. DAVY: This applies just as much to a sub-lessor as to a lessor. The restriction to 8 per cent. per annum would drive these people out of business, and the persons who enjoy the use of the accommodation during the brief season must go short of it. As to leases for a lengthy period, a man who enters into a lease for three years or upwards is well able to look after himself.

Mr. HUGHES: The amendment cuts out practically all business premises. Shops in Hay and Barrack-streets in the centre of the city, where the chief rack-renting goes on, would all be excluded from the measure. The suggestion with regard to lodging-house keepers appeals to me. They generally give more service than the letting of the accommodation; they frequently clean the rooms.

The Minister for Justice: That is provided for by Clause 8.

Mr. HUGHES: Possibly; but the clause is not very clear. Sub-tenants were specifically excluded from the Bill I introduced last season.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The amendment enunciates two principles which should be determined separately. One refers to the scope of the Bill, excluding from its operation all premises rented at over £156 per annum. That amendment I cannot accept. The second principle refers to lodging-houses and summer residences. If

that were moved as a separate amendment, I do not think any member would take exception to it.

Mr. DAVY: I ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Progress reported.

BILL—WAROONA-LAKE CLIFTON RAILWAY.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

House adjourned at 10.31 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 10th December, 1924.

	PAGE
Select Committee, Metropolitan Water Supply, report presented	2242
Close of Session	2242
Leave of absence	2243
Bills: Pearling Act Amendment, 3a.	2243
Mining Development Act Amendment, Com.	2243
Forests Act Amendment, 2b.	2245
Industrial Arbitration Act Amendment, Com.	2245
Premium Bonds, Com.	2259
Plant Diseases Act Amendment, 1a.	2263
Transfer of Land Act Amendment, 1b.	2263
Assent to Bills	2263

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

SELECT COMMITTEE—METROPOLITAN WATER SUPPLY, SEWERAGE AND DRAINAGE DEPARTMENT.

Report presented.

On motion by Hon. A. Lovekin, report of the select committee appointed to inquire into the administration of the Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Department, received and ordered to be printed and taken into consideration at the next sitting of the House.

CLOSE OF SESSION.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I ask the Leader of the House to make a statement indicating to us the probable date of the adjournment of the House this session. Quite a number of Bills are on the Notice Paper, and I should like to know

whether it is proposed to close the session before Christmas or to continue it in the new year. If it is proposed to close before Christmas, we have sufficient work on the Notice Paper already without any further legislation being brought forward for our consideration. Some of us may have certain arrangements made for the next month or two and we would like to know the intentions of the Government regarding the session.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is the desire of the Government to close the session before Christmas. It was with that object in view that I moved that the House should sit on Fridays in addition to the other sitting days, and also that we should meet earlier on each sitting day. From the progress we are making, I am afraid it will be very difficult to adjourn before Christmas. However, I shall do my best to carry out the wishes of the Government and I ask for the co-operation of members.

Hon. J. Duffell: Do you intend to introduce any new Bills yourself this session?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I think there is another Bill to be introduced. Of course there are some to come to us from the Assembly.

Hon. J. Duffell: We will deal with those, of course.

Hon. J. EWING: My experience suggests that there is no possible chance, considering the progress we are making, of closing the session before Christmas.

Hon. J. Duffell: Yes, there is.

Member: Easy.

Hon. J. EWING: It is all very well to say it is easy, but if we receive four or five additional Bills to deal with, it will be exceedingly difficult. The House will not give up its right to discuss measures thoroughly. For instance, there will be the Bill dealing with the financial position. The Minister will probably speak at some length, informing the House of what is being done throughout the country. Most of us would like to have something to say regarding that measure and it will take some time. There are other Bills foreshadowed by the Government in another place. The taxation Bills will have to receive considerable attention. I am desirous, equally with the Minister, of closing the session before Christmas, and members generally are anxious to assist the Minister in every way. In order to help in that direction, I suggest that we should sit in the mornings as well and get the business through. It has been stated that the Premier intends to leave for England early in the new year. We would like to see him go there as soon as possible. If we meet again after Christmas we may sit until March. I suggest that the Minister consider sitting on Mondays as well. Members would not object to giving up their full time to assist the Government to complete the work of the session, but they