country and live on kangaroos for a time. There were also certain periods when they would congregate from hundreds of miles at the Mandurah fisheries, and feast on fish for a few months. I am confident that if the Government established half a dozen stations and fed the natives as much as they wanted, it would not stop their depredations in other directions. Still, as I said before, if this country is of no use for pastoral purposes, I can see no reason why it should not be set aside.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: In the 4,000,000 acres there is some very good country.

Hon. E. McLARTY: I do not approve of setting apart 4,000,000 acres for natives, because they will not stop on it, and I think it would be better if the country was occupied and utilised for other purposes. I am no great advocate of this native business. I have as much sympathy with the natives as anybody else, but it would be better to utilise the country and bring them under civilisation than have them wandering about and trying to menace the life and property of white men wherever they go.

On motion by Hon. V. Hamersley debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.25 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 24th October, 1912.

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Minister for Lands: 1, Statutes of the University of Western Australia. 2, Papers and Regulations *re* assignments of lands as native reserves (ordered on motion by Mr. McDonald.)

By the Minister for Works: 1. By-law of the Yalgoo roads board. 2, By-laws of the municipality of North Perth.

QUESTION—WICKEPIN-MERREDIN RAILWAY DEVIATION.

Council's Message.

Mr. MONGER asked the Minister for Lands (without notice): In view of Message No. 24 from the Legislative Council, will the Government afford an opportunity for such request being discussed at an early date?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: The time for the consideration of the Message will depend entirely on the nature of the business before the House.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Will the Government make an early opportunity to discuss it?

The Minister for Works: Why should we? It will take its ordinary course.

BILL—WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the previous day; Mr. McDowall in the Chair, the Attorney General in charge of the Bill.

First Schedule: [An amendment had been moved by Mr. George to add the following words at the end of paragraph 17:—"or the employer may apply for a lump sum to be fixed under paragraph 16 before the worker leaves the State."]

Hon. J. MITCHELL: This would affect many people who had come from other States, and during their incapacity wished to return to their friends or relatives. In such circumstances it would be well if it could be arranged that a lump sum could be paid at the request of the employer before the person injured left the State. It would be most difficult to keep a watch on him after he had left the State in order to know whether his incapacity continued.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The primary objection to the amendment was that Clause 16 precluded the court being approached to fix a lump sum until three months had elapsed. When it was most convenient to both parties they could make an agreement for the payment of a lump sum the very day after the accident occurred, if they chose to do so. As to the difficulty in watching a man after he left the State, the same difficulty would be experienced if a man went to Broome. In all respects the facilities for keeping a watch over him were as great in other parts of the Commonwealth as they were in the State, but that watchfulness was unnecessary because the onus of proof that his incapacity continued was on the worker. In those circumstances, there was no need to keep a man under close observation.

Amendment put and negatived.

Schedule put and passed.

Schedule 2—(Section 6):

Mr. MALE: Was it the usual thing to value the right hand or the right arm at the same price as the left? It seemed hardly equitable. If a right-handed man lost his right arm he suffered greater loss than the left-handed man who lost his right arm. A right-handed man who lost his left arm could do work he could not undertake if he lost his right arm instead.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It was hard to get absolute justice with regard to the value of any limb. The schedule was more a guide than anything else. It simply sought to establish that the man who lost his arm was properly compensated.

Mr. MALE: Was this copied from any other Act, because if it was a new schedule it might be advisable to reconsider it to a certain extent.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It is copied from the New Zealand Act.

Mr. MUNSIE: We could not place any extra value on a man losing a right arm and not the left because it would lead to endless litigation as to which arm the injured man had mostly used. In 99 per cent. of the cases it would be a man doing manual labour who lost the use of an arm. The man doing manual labour was just as incapacitated by losing the right arm as by losing the left. In a clerical occupation, on the other hand, a man might lose his left arm and not be greatly incapacitated from following his occupation. The schedule, however, provided for those most likely to be incapacitated and the compensation should be the same for the loss of either arm.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Circumstances differed. A person might lose either hand and suffer to such an extent as to render him entitled to full compensation for total incapacity. On the other hand, with the loss of a hand, he might be able to carry on clerical work practically the same as before, and should not be entitled to 80 per cent. of the full amount provided for total incapacity. The question was how far the injury restricted a man earning a living, and compensation should be given so that those dependant on him might still have what they had been in the habit of receiving in the past. It was rather a mistake to bind any court down to a given percentage.

Mr. Thomas: Will it not save a lot of litigation?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Fixing the sum, as was done in the schedule, might work hardship. Under the present system the injured man got the justice to which he was entitled.

Mr. Munsie: Sometimes. Is the loss of an eye not worth more than 30s.?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: More than 30s. was provided for in the schedule.

Mr. Munsie: But it was paid under the old Act.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: There may have been circumstances in connection with the loss of the eye which showed that there was negligence, or the man may have been receiving compensation previous to the case being decided. No hard and fast rule ought to be made. The circumstances concerning the case should be considered, and the injury effected to the individual should be compensated for. The thing to be considered was the individual's capacity to earn a living after the accident. The schedule provided only

a certain percentage, whereas perhaps the injured man should get the full amount for total incapacity.

Schedule put and passed.

Schedule 3—(Section 9):

Mr. MALE: Would the Minister explain the words, "any occupation in which a worker incurs a risk of falling any distance, if the injury or death of the worker results from a fall." It seemed that a domestic servant falling downstairs fell a distance, or that a workman going through the door and slipping fell a distance.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The schedule related to a man falling a distance such as from scaffolding or in the shaft of a mine, or from the mast of a ship. He could not conceive of any instance that would not be covered, and he did not consider that it would cover too much. He could not think of a case of falling from a distance, in the course of employment, that should be excluded.

Mr. MALE: Was not the meaning much wider than was intended? Would not a domestic servant falling from a chair be included?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: This schedule related to the exemption provision of Clause 9. If the hon. member would turn back to the clause where it said the employer should not be liable under certain conditions, he would see that there were exemptions. If a man was engaged in any work where there was a risk of falling a distance, the man would come under this Bill.

Schedule put and passed.

Fourth Schedule—(Section 12):

Mr. MUNSIE moved an amendment—

That the following be added to the schedule:—"Cyanide poisoning or its sequelae."

He had known of many cases on the goldfields where men working in cyanide vats had suffered for some considerable time from the effects of cyanide poisoning without receiving compensation. If the schedule went through as it was printed these persons would still be unprovided for. He knew of one case where a man had to remain in a hospital for several months from working in cyanide vats, and he could get no compensation under the old Act. The Bill provided for many classes of poisoning that men suffered from through working on the goldfields. There was lead poisoning, mercury poisoning, phosphorus poisoning, and arsenic poisoning. Therefore cyanide poisoning should be added to the list.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. MALE: At the end of the schedule in the English Act there was a paragraph that had been omitted from this Bill. He did not know if that paragraph was required here; at the same time it might be required. It was difficult to understand what the paragraph meant.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The paragraph to which the hon. member referred had a special reference in the conclusion of the English Act to the methods of dealing with the Acts of Parliament relating to the various subjects specified in existence on the British statute-book. It was only a direction making clear the application of existing Acts of Parliament to the interpretation of this Act in Great Britain itself. We had not the corresponding regulations or Acts in this State, therefore the paragraph was unnecessary.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Bill contained many provisions that were new, and he suggested that the Attorney General should cause to be published a synopsis of the provisions of the Bill before it came into operation so that the public would know how things stood. It was not possible for every member of the community to get a copy of the Bill, yet every member of the community was interested in the measure. The Attorney General might answer that the newspapers reported the matter pretty fully. But a synopsis should be prepared by the Parliamentary Draftsman and published in the newspapers of the country. He was sure the newspapers would publish such a synopsis without cost.

The Attorney General: Not when the Government want it.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The newspapers would willingly publish such a synopsis. Of course it would not suit the lawyers, but in the interests of the people this should be done.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The Bill was only a small one containing but 24 pages, and anyone who took an interest in it could purchase a copy of the Bill, and the Government would then receive some benefit. He could not accept the member's guarantee that if the Government made a synopsis the newspapers would publish it.

Hon. J. Mitchell: I did not guarantee.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It was not possible to guarantee that such a course would be taken, but he might say that he would favourably consider the matter if the hon. member would give some assurance that in another place the Bill would go through with the same few amendments that it had received here.

Mr. A. A. Wilson: Did the question of ventilation come under the third schedule?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Mining came under the third schedule and whatever accidents occurred in consequence of bad air or explosions or any other source of accident in a mine would come under the operation of this Bill. If there was any injury provable to the working in a mine or from the use of explosives that would come under the third schedule.

The CHAIRMAN: The third schedule had been passed; we were now dealing with the fourth schedule.

Mr. HARPER: In regard to pneumoconiosis or miner's phthisis, miners while working knew they were contracting these complaints. Were they justified in remaining at such work? It was like committing suicide if these people remained working in cyanide vats when they knew the cyanide fumes were affecting them. In hundreds of cases men were aware for many a long day before anything serious was set up that they were working at an occupation that was injurious to their health. Therefore it was due to the worker to change his occupation.

Mr. Dwyer: Easier said than done.

Mr. HARPER: There were many cases of men in deep mines using rock drills, who were being affected, and in some cases he had advised men to get out of the mine and get into another where hand drills were used. A miner should recognise that he was working in injurious places. He (Mr. Harper) had worked in the Broken Hill lead and silver mines, and if he had worked there longer than he did he would have been under the soil many years ago; but he changed his occupation. The responsibility to some extent rested with the people employed.

Mr. Munsie: All have not the means of getting out.

Mr. HARPER: Because they liked their occupation many people refused to change it, even in the face of considerable risk. Miners preferred working with rock drills because the work was easier and more interesting. They did not like to go back to the heavy work involved in the use of the hand drill.

Mr. Munsie: Have you ever done any work with rock-drills?

Mr. HARPER: Yes.

Mr. Munsie: Then it was never in rising, or you would not say it was easy.

Mr. HARPER: In his time he had worked in more rises than the hon. member had seen. It was a great injustice to the mining industry that men who had contracted industrial diseases should be allowed to remain in that industry. He knew many people who had changed their occupation, and by so doing saved their lives. Generally speaking, cyanide work was not a very dangerous occupation, but at times it was certainly injurious.

Mr. Munsie: Should not the man who works there be entitled to something?

Mr. HARPER: But a man should not work there, seeing that there were other occupations to be followed. Even though it seemed it was of no use talking to this Committee, still another place would take notice of it. All these several industries should get a fair and reasonable chance. Everybody was anxious that they should be encouraged. It was very necessary that the points mentioned by him should be taken into consideration. Very few understood the Bill as well as he did, for mining happened to be an occupation with which he had had a great deal to do.

Mr. A. A. WILSON: As a result of a long experience in coal mining, he desired to protect the miner from the ill-effects of bad ventilation in mines. He

had seen men carried unconscious out of mines from the effects of bad air, and, in his opinion the Bill did not provide sufficient protection in this regard. He would suggest to the Attorney General that after the word "mining" in the last line of the schedule, the words "ill-effects of insufficient ventilation in mines" should be inserted. This would serve to keep companies up to the Mines Regulation Act, and compel them to provide sufficient air.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The hon. member would scarcely achieve his object by adding the words in the manner proposed. "Mining" in the schedule was simply a description of the process involving the diseases bracketed together in the opposite column.

Mr. A. A. Wilson: Where can I put them?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: To insert the proposed amendment in the schedule it would be necessary first to determine the name of the diseases arising from bad air.

Mr. A. A. Wilson: I do not know it, but I know the man afflicted cannot work.

Hon. Frank Wilson: The Coal Mines Regulation Act covers the point; it provides certain restrictions in regard to ventilation.

Mr. A. A. Wilson: But if the provisions are not observed, and a man suffers an injury, where does his compensation come in?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The hon. member should understand that the schedule was capable of being added to at any time by proclamation. He (the Attorney General) agreed that some compensation should be provided for anybody who suffered permanently from the ill-effects of poisoning by foul air, but before the object of the hon. member could be achieved in respect to the schedule, it would be necessary to give a name to the disease, if disease it could be called. Unless the hon. member was prepared with the term he would be well advised to leave it for subsequent addition to the schedule by proclamation.

Mr. HEITMANN: It was almost impossible to describe the injuries received from bad air as a disease, and therefore it seemed to him that it could scarcely be included in the schedule. Yet, clearly, if, in consequence of foul air, a man sustained injuries which necessitated his laying up for a time, compensation should be paid, if not on the score of disease, then on the score of accident. He did not think a man would be laid-up permanently as the result of foul gases in a mine.

Mr. A. A. Wilson: What!

Mr. HEITMANN: At all events, it would be but an exceptional case, and in any event the injuries could scarcely be classed as a disease. When a man was overcome by gas and had to be carried out of a mine the injuries could rightly be classed as the result of an accident.

The CHAIRMAN: We had already added to the schedule cyanide poisoning, and if the hon. member desired it an amendment including foul air poisoning would be accepted.

Mr. A. A. WILSON: The Attorney General had given an undertaking that the diseases would be classified and added to the schedule afterwards. He (Mr. A. A. Wilson) remembered two men who were poisoned in one of the Collie mines two years ago.

Hon. Frank Wilson: That was through a fire.

Mr. A. A. WILSON: Certainly that had been due to a fire, but six years ago a worker had been brought out of a Collie mine unconscious and had died the next morning. That man's widow had received nothing. In such circumstances the widow certainly ought to get something. The death had resulted simply from the ill-effects of bad air.

Mr. DOOLEY: Perhaps the hon. member's object could be met if a general condition was inserted covering any disease caused by or arising from the effects of bad or injurious gases in any mine. In view of the information supplied by the member for Collie (Mr. A. A. Wilson) some provision appeared to be necessary.

Mr. MUNSIE: While sympathising with the hon. member's object, he could not see how provision could be made in

a schedule dealing with diseases to cover what he considered was an accident. A case occurred prior to the present Act coming into existence, in which four men lost their lives as a result of dynamite fumes in the Mount Charlotte mine. Under this measure he considered the dependants of those men would be entitled to compensation. If he was not correct, the Attorney General should recommit the Bill and make provision for such cases. In dozens of cases, to his knowledge, men had lost a week or a fortnight's work through having been overcome by dynamite fumes, and under the present law had received compensation for accidents of that description.

Mr. Dwyer: It is just as much an accident as losing an arm.

Mr. A. A. WILSON moved an amendment—

That the words "any disease arising from the ill-effects of insufficient ventilation of mines" be added to the schedule.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The amendment would have his support if he was sure that it would achieve the object of the hon. member. The question was whether it would come under the technical definition of a disease. It might be advisable to amend Clause 12. He preferred to let the matter stand over in order to get a correct definition and to do it by proclamation or by recommitting the Bill. The matter would have his consideration.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Attorney General ought to know what he wanted before the Bill left the House. It would be objectionable if the Minister added by proclamation anything that members desired afterwards. The Attorney General had explained the other night that he would use the proclamation only while Parliament was not in session.

The Attorney General: No, I did not: the hon. member must have misunderstood me.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Minister said while the present party were in power the House would be in session a good part of the year, but perhaps it would be desired to add something to this schedule when the House was not sitting, and the proclamation would be used only for matters of urgency.

Mr. A. A. WILSON: On the assurance of the Attorney General, he asked leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The imagination of the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) was wonderfully prolific, wonderfully rich, and excessively vitalised, and so long as we admired it simply as imagination we would not go wrong, but when he mistook his imagination for facts it was necessary to correct him, and this was an instance. He (the Attorney General) had actually argued the opposite from what the member for Northam said, that Parliament was not the place to decide on additions, that Cabinet was a superior organ in the way of utility for that purpose, and never by inference, statement, or innuendo, had he led the Chamber to believe that he intended to submit any additions to this schedule for the consideration of Parliament prior to proclaiming them. If he found that the desire of the member for Collie (Mr. A. A. Wilson) could be better, more safely and more expeditiously met by proclamation, he would adopt that course. If he thought it wiser, or safer, after reflection, to recommit the Bill next Tuesday to amend Clause 12, he would do so.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: If he had misunderstood the Attorney General he regretted it, but he was under the impression that the Minister said if Parliament was not in session it might be necessary to add to the schedule, and that would be done by proclamation, and also that he believed Cabinet to be much wiser than Parliament and more capable of amending the law than Parliament.

The Attorney General: That is imagination again.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Minister had given him to understand that he would use the proclamation only if Parliament was not in session. Now, however, we knew that the Attorney General thought he was the proper person to amend this law from time to time.

The Attorney General: No, do not take that flattering unction to thy soul.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Attorney General said, if he thought it safer to recommit the Bill he would do so, or he might make the desired provision by proclamation. If he was more certain of getting his amendment in——

Mr. DWYER: On a point of order, was the hon. member in order in discussing something outside the scope of the schedule, namely, the mode which the Attorney General should employ to meet the wishes of the member for Collie?

The CHAIRMAN: There was scarcely a point of order in that.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: If the Minister made the amendment by way of proclamation, we would never have an opportunity of discussing it, and he claimed the right to ask the Attorney General what his intentions were. He protested against the Attorney General altering the law by means of proclamation while Parliament was sitting.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The hon. member was right in desiring to know his intentions. His present intentions were to carefully consider the point submitted and as a result to take one or other of the courses he had suggested.

Schedule as amended put and passed.

Mr. GREEN: At this stage the Attorney General might be asked whether he would recommit the Bill in order to consider paragraph (b) of Clause 1 of the First Schedule.

The CHAIRMAN: The Committee could not now go back to the First Schedule.

Mr. GREEN: It had been stated to him that at that stage he could ask the Attorney General if he would be prepared to consider this question.

The CHAIRMAN: Who gave the hon. member to understand that?

Mr. GREEN: The Speaker, whom he had consulted on the question. All he wanted to do was to ask the Attorney General whether he would consider that particular paragraph of the First Schedule, which referred to the amount to be paid for total incapacity as £400.

The Attorney General: I cannot debate it now.

Mr. GREEN: All that he desired was to merely draw the Attorney General's attention to the matter.

The Attorney General: I will promise the hon. member that I will consider the point.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

BILL—ACCOUNTANCY.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 20th August.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam): This Bill has been brought down by the Government and it is true that the Premier has said he does not care much about it. I fancy that if the will of the House were taken now the Bill would be defeated. It provides that those persons engaged in accountancy work may form a very close corporation indeed, and I think I might say that the provisions of the Bill are altogether against common fairness. The Bill, I understand, was drafted at the request of the accountants now practising in Perth and amongst other arguments used by the Premier was the fact that the Bill was designed to protect the public. The Premier however produced no evidence of that. My opinion is that it is intended to protect the accountants now practising, as they alone will benefit by the passing of the Bill as it stands. It is true that others may qualify and may become registered but there is a very restrictive provision with regard to registration. I think we might consider how a man might become registered. First we have a council, composed of twelve gentlemen whose names are mentioned in the Bill. I think all those gentlemen are very worthy of forming the first council. It will be noticed that the Government have determined that at least one-half of them are to be Government officials, and probably those who will seek admission later on under the measure will find that to be an advantage because these officials have nothing to gain by making admission difficult. I am pleased to see included among those twelve names that of Mr. Whitely, and I mention this because I noticed in the

Press he has been objected to. If there is one man who is a capable accountant amongst the Government officials it is certainly Mr. Whitely, and if there is one man amongst the twelve who will do his duty fearlessly and well that man is Mr. Whitely. It is provided that every person who on the 23rd November, 1911, was a member of any institute mentioned in the second schedule may be registered. I do not know why the date was made the 23rd November, 1911, nor do I know why these gentlemen are to be admitted because I understand many of the members of those societies became members on the mere payment of a fee and not because of any examination. To that extent therefore I think some care will have to be exercised in admitting them to registration. Then too it is provided that those gentlemen practising as public accountants for five years before the passing of the Act shall be registered. I would like to know why a man who has practised for four and a half years is to be denied registration; it seems to me extraordinary that only the men of five years' standing are to be admitted. It is also provided that accountants may after passing a prescribed examination obtain registration. It will be readily understood by this House that it will be difficult for any number of accountants to be registered under these provisions; it will be seen and understood that if we are to accept the Bill as suggested by the Premier we shall be throwing out of work a great number of men who are now practising accountancy to the benefit of themselves, while at the same time the public cannot afford to do without them. The Premier compared the profession of accountancy to the professions of law and medicine, and also referred to the registration of veterinary surgeons and to the fact that we registered chemists. I do not see that we can compare the work of the accountant with that of the other professions which the Premier mentioned. The accountant is used by business men largely and not by the general public. It is provided also in the Bill that a registered accountant may employ just as many clerks as he pleases. This is a very good argument against the Bill. An accountant can cause his work to be done by twenty clerks, some of whom would be young men who would draw very low salaries. It is also provided, strangely enough, that a registered man may conduct the business of his employer for three months in each year. If a clerk can do that, and possibly conduct the business of an office which employs twenty men, we should provide means by which that man may become registered.

Mr. Heitmann: Blow the Bill out.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I think we must reject it as it now stands.

Mr. Heitmann: I do not see why we should want to form a fence around the accountants now practising.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I agree with the hon. member, but I do not agree altogether that we should throw out the Bill without attempting to improve it; a Bill providing for registration might do good.

Mr. Dwyer: Refer it to a select committee.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The hon. member might do that; it would be useless for me to propose it. I think it would be a good idea to refer it to a select committee, and the committee could report later on and the report could be considered next session. It is a good idea to provide for the registration of accountants, and I think the public should be protected.

Mr. Heitmann: I do not see why the accountants should have the administration of this piece of law.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I think that is usual. I do not object to the machinery clauses in the Bill because they are like the machinery clauses in other measures, but I object to the provisions generally. I think the public should be protected, and I think probably we should be doing right in passing some measure which would give the people outside the State who have investments here greater confidence.

Mr. Heitmann: But they are allowing people to come in who have never passed examinations.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The hon. member must know that accountants are re-

gistered in other countries, and the public would be satisfied if an accountant were registered under this measure if he was capable, and it is for the protection of the public that we should attempt to improve the Bill. The hon. member knows that we must discriminate between the bookkeeper and the investigating accountant.

Mr. Dwyer: The New Zealand Act gives the man a status, but does not prevent anyone else from practising.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Probably that would be sufficient here. I do not think that the Bill should in any way refer to the ordinary bookkeeper, but we should content ourselves to make the law apply to investigating accountants. We should not do anything to prevent any man earning his living at accountancy. All practising now should be continued in their work, and in order that this may be done I would suggest that, if the Premier will allow us to amend the Bill——

Mr. Dwyer: The Premier said it was not a party Bill.

Mr. Heitmann: I would vote for a select committee or that the Bill be read this day six months; I do not care which.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I think that as the Bill has been brought down the House should determine whether it can be made a satisfactory measure or not. I suggest that there should be two registers. The first one should include the names of all now practising and they should be allowed to continue their occupation. The second register should include the members of those societies mentioned in the Second Schedule, and also accountants of five years' standing. If they have been practising for over five years they must have satisfied the public and gained considerable experience. We must of course include those who practice now and who can pass a special examination to be set by the council of the society. Hon. members will agree with me that if a man has been practising five years and is able to pass such an examination he should be placed on the second register, which would be, of course, the more important one. Then there would be those who could get admission after passing examination in this State or elsewhere, but the examination should not be altogether under the control of the society of accountants. It might also be necessary to place on the first register the names of members of the various institutions mentioned in the Second Schedule. I should object to including them on the more important register, because I believe many of the members of those bodies merely paid a fee and by the payment of that fee obtained membership. If we are to have an Act, we want the registration to mean something, as it does in New Zealand, and we do not want long lists of gentlemen who have not qualified but have merely had the good luck to be members of some organisation. I agree with hon. members that the Bill as introduced by the Premier is one that will commend itself to the majority of the House, but I would ask members to take into consideration the advisableness of making some considerable improvement in the Bill. We would be wise to do that rather than reject the measure without further consideration. I hope the member for Perth will move for a select committee.

Mr. Dwyer: Why not do it yourself?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Because I would not get it, probably.

Mr. Dwyer: I would support you.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I would prefer to support the hon. member. This House should be very careful not to take away the living of any man. I can inform the House that if this Bill in its present form becomes law, many persons will be prevented from following the occupations they are now engaged in, although they are capable men and doing good work. I believe we can frame a measure that will provide for the men now engaged in accountancy and for efficient men who can pass an examination in the future. It would be wise for the House to do that, but unless that can be done the Bill should be rejected without further consideration.

Mr. DWYER (Perth): The principle of this Bill will commend itself to a number of the members of this House, but some of the incidence of the Bill will not do so. The hon. member for Northam

wants to know why a certain date, 23rd November, 1911, was mentioned in the Bill. I can explain the reason. On that date a deputation from the accountants' society waited on the Premier. I had the honour of introducing that deputation, and they put before the Premier their reasons why some legislation should be introduced so as to give to them the same protection as is given to dentists and other persons. In the course of his reply the Premier said that whatever legislation was brought forward would take effect as from that date, because a starting point had to be made somewhere, and if the intention to introduce legislation was made known the door would be left open for the formation of a number of mushroom societies which would come under the legislation to be introduced, and yet might not merit inclusion in the Bill. It seemed to me then and now that the principal ground of complaint that the accountants had and have is in the fact that under the Associations Incorporation Act of 1895 it is possible for any few persons to come together, who have never seen the inside of a ledger, day book, cash book, journal, or any other book used in accountancy, and form themselves into an association which they can call the Royal Chartered Institute of Accountants, or some such high-falutin title. This the law allows them to do, and, as a matter of fact, I believe associations have been formed and a number of them are referred to in the Second Schedule. There are in Western Australia three institutions or associations of accountants. One is termed the Institute of Accountants and Auditors of Western Australia, the second the Society of Accountants and Auditors of Western Australia, and the third the Society of Public Accountants and Auditors of Western Australia. The peculiarity which all these associations possess in common is that it was not necessary for a member of these associations to be a qualified accountant, such as he would require to be under this measure. As soon as one of these associations became incorporated, which meant only the payment of a small fee, a member could hang up his brass plate with the letters I.A.A., W.A.; or S.A.A., W.A.; or S.P.A.A., W.A. on it. The public passing a place where all these letters appeared might imagine that they belonged to somebody with extremely high qualifications and attainments.

The Minister for Mines: That principle has been recognised in all legislation of the kind.

Mr. DWYER: I am referring to the formation of these mushroom societies. They were formed not entirely because of the qualifications of their members, although there is no doubt that in each of these societies there are a number of practically qualified men, but simply by virtue of the Associations Incorporation Act. Without that Act being on the statute-book, it would not have been possible for these societies to have been formed. But the opportunity having been provided, there is nothing whatever to prevent the formation of 50 similar bodies, all calling themselves associations of accountants and auditors, or ringing the changes on those terms. After they had formed their small society, they could put those letters after their names, and by the uninitiated it might be thought these persons were graduates of some university of high standing. Our legislation allows the formation of these small societies without reference to the qualification of their members, without examination of the members, and without requiring them to have any qualifications, but merely because certain persons have banded together and wish a society to be formed; and I think that the time has come when we must stop, in the interests of the accountants themselves, and in the interests of the public at large, the formation of any more of these societies of mushroom growth. The only way we can do that is by the passing of a Bill whereby a legal status will be given to all properly qualified accountants. When we do that we can at the same time and in the same measure prevent, by means of penal clauses, anybody from advertising himself as possessing the qualifications of an accountant unless he comes within the purview of the Act. I say it is a shame that under the existing legislation it is possible for these societies

and associations to be formed and the public to be deluded, and that people can put letters after their names, to which they are not entitled intrinsically, and which are only so many threads of a spider's web to induce the public to believe that they possess qualifications to which they have no claim whatever. Up to the present time, only three of these associations have been formed, and if we do nothing else but stop the multiplication of these by passing this Bill, we will be doing a good work indeed and one for which the public will have every reason to thank us.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. DWYER: I was referring to certain societies or associations of accountants that had grown up in our midst. I do not wish to be misunderstood in my reference to them. I knew from my personal knowledge of many members of these societies that there are very many of them well qualified by practical knowledge and skill, and that there are a number of others well qualified, not only by practical knowledge, but also by theoretical knowledge, which in my estimation is of secondary importance to practical knowledge, but I wish to emphasise the possibility of similar associations and bodies ad infinitum growing up in our midst and entitling their members to the calling or profession of accountants. It is this abuse, the abuse of our legislation, which I consider we should stop and which it is the intention of the Bill to put an end to if carried with modifications. For a moment I wish to refer to the deputation that waited on the Premier in November last. Previous to that deputation the draft Bill, in very much the same form as the measure now before the House, had been submitted by the society of accountants. I said in introducing the deputation—and it holds good now in reference to this Bill—that if such combinations, referring to accountants, were under proper control and supervision so that the public interests were safeguarded, it was a good thing that they, like other professions—instancing the veterinary surgeons—the Bill for registering which was before Parliament, should be given legal status, a cachet so to speak, that would show to the public who were the members belonging to that body, and would confer certain privileges on them under the ægis of the law and prevent unqualified persons or quacks entering into undue competition with them against the interests of the profession itself and against the interests of the public at large. I also remarked at that deputation that the Bill as submitted in draft form then would require to be considerably enlarged in order that no injustice would be done to anyone at the time practising as an accountant; and that is where I find fault with the Bill before us, because it does not in my estimation give sufficient protection to persons practising at present as accountants. In our banks and in our insurance institutions there are many men doing accountancy work of an important kind who are thoroughly qualified to be accountants and who are just as well qualified as some of the members of the associations mentioned in the schedule who, by the very fact of being members of the associations and for no other reason, are becoming, if this Bill is carried into effect as it now stands, registered accountants in this State. If the privilege is given to certain members of these associations to be registered accountants by the mere fact of having become members of these societies, a similar privilege should be extended to those now practising or carrying on accountancy in order that no injustice may be done to them. The future can tell for itself. If the Bill is passed then, indeed, those who enter the profession of accountancy or who endeavour to follow out that profession later on will do so with their eyes open; but certain practices, customs and privileges have grown up outside this measure, and I consider this Chamber ought to have regard to the livelihood of those who, through not being qualified under the provisions of the Bill to practice as accountants, may be thrown out of their positions and not allowed to earn their livelihood. If an accountant at present in a bank or insurance institution were for any cause or other

to resign his present appointment and endeavour to earn his living outside—I am only taking him as representing a class who exist all over the city—and this Bill is passed in its present form, he would be debarred from earning his livelihood in the business or calling or profession in which he has been engaged for perhaps the greater part of his life. I think that is an injustice which should be remedied, and I say again, as I said on the occasion of that deputation, that we must see that no injustice is done to those who are at present practising as accountants, whether in public institutions or in private institutions, or carrying on business on their own account. I also said at that deputation that there was no sufficient provision—in fact at that time no provision was made—as regards small towns. We all know that in small country towns the books of small storekeepers are kept by persons who would not be qualified to practise as accountants under this Bill. It is true that certain provision is made for them by saying that the Governor may from time to time exempt any portion of the State from the operation of the Act, and may at any time revoke any such proclamation. But I hold that, instead of a provision of that kind being made, the provision ought to be that the Act is confined to certain districts, to large towns only where there are a certain number of persons available who are qualified under the Act to practise as accountants, and where the supply would be such that moderate fees and only moderate fees, or reasonable fees, would be charged.

Mr. Heitmann: There may be a large business in a small town.

Mr. DWYER: If there is a qualified accountant in a small town then that town might as well be one of those places to which the measure shoud apply, but if that were done care would have to be taken to fix a certain scale of charges: because where there is only one man and there is no fixed scale of charges, there is no limit to what he may charge. In the profession to which I have the honour to belong, the public are always safeguarded. Every Bill a legal practitioner sends in is subject to taxation by an officer of the court.

Mr. Heitmann: You have a very wide range.

Mr. DWYER: We have not. The charges are all prescribed. Though frequently I have with great pain of mind to listen to certain aspersions being cast upon that profession to which I belong, I must say that in no other profession are the public in regard to their dealings with that profession so well and markedly safeguarded as in the legal procession.

Mr. O'Loghlen: What protection have the public when they only rub the lawyer off the rolls?

Mr. DWYER: The protection is that when a man does anything disgraceful or anything dishonourable in the profession he meets with the severest punishment a man can possibly meet with; he is disgraced in the eyes of his fellows and in the eyes of the country at large, and he is debarred from practising his profession at all, in addition to which there is the criminal remedy against him?

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must not follow that line of discussion.

Mr. DWYER: I wish to make a few comments on the remarks of the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell). He informed the House that he regretted to see the name of Mr. J. F. Whitely was suggested in the public Press to be omitted from among those who were to form the first council of this proposed society. I am quite with the hon. member in that. The reasons given why Mr. Whitely should be omitted were given in a circular sent to myself and published in the Press at large by the friends of the Bill. I think they entirely over-reached themselves in doing this, and for the sake of the gentleman they attack through the mention in the public Press, I feel it is incumbent on me to make a protest against these indirect aspersions on Mr. Whitely in his professional attainments or otherwise. They say—

> As the Bill, if passed, will principally affect practising men who can be sued if they do not perform competent work, it is considered that they should have the majority of representation on

the council, and therefore it is requested that at least the name of one non-practising person be removed, and the name of Mr. Weir substituted. The name which it is considered should be removed is that of Mr. Whitely, as (a) he is not a person qualified to be registered under the Act, (b) he is not a State officer. Mr. Eliot is the only other person in the schedule who is not entitled to be registered, but it was considered that his position and standing warranted his being placed on the council.

I wish to make a comment on this. First of all, it does not necessarily follow that the majority of the members of this council should be practising accountants. As a matter of fact, I think that the better safeguard would be that the majority of the council should, if possible, be members of the public service.

Mr. Green: Hear, hear; that is the point.

Mr. DWYER: They at any rate may be entirely impartial as regards the framing the regulations and the other conduct of the Act. Next I would say that, while Mr. Weir is a public qualified accountant in every way, I do not see why Mr. Whitely's name should be struck out in order that that of Mr. Weir should be substituted. It is said that of the names in the schedule only Mr. Whitely and Mr. Eliot are among those who are not qualified to be registered under the Bill, but could any body of men frame a stronger condemnation of the measure—and these were the gentlemen who wanted the Bill passed—than to ask for the removal of the names of Mr. Whitely and Mr. Eliot? Mr. Whitely in his conduct as a public officer has always given entire satisfaction and I think he is one of the ablest officers in the State. Mr. Eliot is the Under Treasurer. These gentlemen forget to mention that there are others whose names are on the schedule who would not be qualified to practise had they not the membership of these associations as a qualification. Mr. Whitely could have been a member of any of these societies: Mr. Eliot could have been a member of any of these societies; both Mr. Whitely and Mr. Eliot could have been members of any of these societies had they wished it by merely sending in their names, but they did not choose to do so. There is a number of others practising as accountants in Perth who could also have been members of these societies, but they did not send in their names to the council. I thought it was very ungracious and ungenerous of those gentlemen to have said that Mr. Whitely's name should be removed. I know Mr. Whitely professionally and personally, and I say there is not in the schedule the name of one who has as much right to be placed on the council of the proposed corporation as has Mr. Whitely. Reference has been made to the examinations to be held under this measure. In regard to that I would point out that we are shortly to have a University fully established in our midst. I hope that University will be an up-to-date and modern institution. If that is to be the case there is no department of knowledge which should be more fittingly entrusted to the University than that of accountancy. In the University of Birmingham, the leading modern University of England, I understand accountancy is a special faculty. Mr. Dicksee, I think, the author of several books on accountancy, is the professor of accountancy at that institution. If our University is to be an up-to-date institution it ought to take business routine and business practice, and to do that, accountancy should be taken as easily first among those subjects to be placed under the control of the University Senate. It seems to me that if that is to be the case the proper persons to settle the examinations are the members of the University Senate, and the council of the accountants' society. There are other weak points in the Bill. Clause 44 in particular requires fundamental alteration. There are, of course, others to which I intend taking exception in Committee, but of them all I think Clause 44 is of most importance to the public. There again we see a great weakness in the Bill, because it exempts from its operations an auditor elected or appointed under the Municipal Corporations Act. As a matter of

fact an auditor appointed or elected under the Municipal Corporations Act should be, if anyone is required to be, fully qualified and competent. In Victoria, I believe, municipal auditors have to pass a special examination, and I am informed by the member for Subiaco that the same holds good of New South Wales. The very fact of exempting these officials from the provisions of the measure shows tremendous weakness, because if they are not required to be qualified, why require it of the man who makes up tradesmen's books? Then, too, in many legal offices it is the custom to make up settlements of trustees' accounts and to keep accounts of estates. Under the Bill as drafted this will be impossible. But, of course, all these are matters which, I believe, will receive attention in Committee, and which will be amended when the Bill reaches that stage. I intend to vote for the second reading of the Bill, not because I like it as it is at present drafted, but because I think it emphasises a principle to which most of us would subscribe, namely the principle that when qualified assistance is required only qualified and competent persons shall do the work. And, furthermore, it protects these persons in the exercise of their work. But I do think that while we protect and safeguard the interests of the accountants we must also see to it that the interests of the public are safeguarded; and we must see to it further that the interests of no person who is at present practising accountancy business, or any person now doing accountancy work and who may have to-morrow to go out into the world and practise his business, will be placed at a disadvantage. With these qualifications and reservations I shall have pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill in order that it may reach the Committee stage.

On motion by Mr. Heitmann debate adjourned.

BILL—LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. T. H. Bath) in moving the second reading said: In submitting this measure for the consideration of hon. members I propose to make my introductory statement as full and complete as possible; because I realise that proposals such as these, embodying as they do a radical alteration of the conditions, tenure, and disposal of our Crown lands, should be justified or vindicated to the fullest extent, and therefore I do not propose to content myself, as is customary with second readings, with a mere explanation of the principles underlying the measure. While I have no desire to depreciate in any way the importance of the various industries of Western Australia, such as mining, the timber industry, or those secondary establishments which are largely dependent upon these primary industries, I want to point out that this proposal deals with fundamental problems in the government of Western Australia, and that the future welfare of the State is almost entirely dependent upon the wisdom with which we frame our land legislation. It is true that other industries may have more glamour about them. In the mining industry, too, there may be occasions when the discovery of rich mines bring to a community a sudden burst of prosperity which on no occasion is ever parallelled by the more sober industry of agriculture. We realise, too, the importance of secondary industries, and the attraction which that community has which can show large manufacturing establishments involving the highest display of commercial and engineering skill, and the highest perfection yet reached of machinery. But the foundations of stable national life must always rest upon the industry directly connected with the cultivation of the soil, and to the extent that our legislative and administrative proposals conserve the interests of those who are already putting the soil to productive use, and at the same time extends the area so utilised and the number of people utilising it; and as the science of agriculture progresses, leads to closer and closer development of those areas, to that extent we promote the stability of the State and the welfare of its component parts. And, conversely, if through our neglect of this important industry and the laws governing it, or through our ac-

quiesence in evil influences we permit the number of sturdy yeomenry on the soil to be reduced; if we permit by that neglect or acquiesence the concentration of that ownership in the hands of the few, to that extent we imperil our future welfare and, as shown in the history of some countries, cause it to topple over altogether. I have no intention of traversing the historical side of land tenures, more than to say that in the past empires have fallen because of their neglect of these problems, because of their failure to devise wise land laws suitable for the present and also for the future. We have all the weight of scriptural law, of chronicle and of prophecy teaching us the same lesson. Great historians have pointed to this as the weak spot which causes the fall of great empires, and to-day throughout all the civilised world one half of the legislative and administrative effort is directed to legislation and administration seeking to mitigate and minimise the evils which have been occasioned by errors in the land systems of these communities. If I were anxious to deal with this from the academic point of view I might quote for hours the opinions of great philosophical writers, and writers of political economy, and bring together a consensus of opinion in favour of the due recognition of the rights of the community in regard to the tenure upon which land shall be held. But I realise that I can commend this Bill in a better way to the House by dealing with it from a more material point of view, and dealing with it more from the standpoint of our experience in Great Britain, from which the systems, not only of Australia and of the United States of America sprang, and also from the standpoint of the experience of the States of Australia and the Dominion of New Zealand. I want to emphasise once more the fact that this involves a radical departure and at the same time to emphasise the great importance of the subject; and I think there is no one who will dispute for one moment—it is indeed a recognised truism—that sound principles of land tenure must be capable of securing certain assured results. They should, in the first place, be designed to secure the productive use of the soil to the fullest extent, because as I have said before, upon that mainly national prosperity rests. They should not only ensure close settlement and the establishment of a bold peasantry, but, what is even more important still, the system of land tenure should be able to maintain that for to-day, for the next generation, for the next century. A true statesmanship, particularly in regard to land, legislates not only for to-day but legislates for the future, and always has in regard the welfare of future generations. It should be a system which will give encouragement to the landless, particularly those of limited means, to take up the important and basic work of the tillage of the soil. It should, above all things, discourage speculation, and as I have said before, and wish to repeat, it should not only secure these results for the present but it should assure them for all time. It is from this standpoint that I believe the policy thus embodied in this measure can be amply fulfilled, and, conversely, I wish to point out that all our experience, particularly in British communities, has demonstrated that the system to which people so fondly adhere, so that it has reached the stage of an absolute delusion, the freehold system, instead of securing these sound principles in land tenure, has on the contrary absolutely discouraged them, and that throughout all the history of these British communities the one result has been the dispossession and the divorcement of the people from the soil. It has given direct encouragement to the growth of large landed estates, and as these communities increase in years it has ultimately resulted in only those who are possessed of wealth being able to pursue what is after all perhaps the first great industry of which civilisation has any knowledge. This system which we are asked to respect as something treasured in British tradition, which is so often acclaimed as the only system which can secure the individual in the right to call a little or a big piece of land his very own, and which, if an alternative is suggested, arouses the hue and cry of ruin, confiscation, and stagnation, reveals the cold incontrovertible fact that it

has the opposite result, and that, instead of securing the individual in possession of a large or small piece of land, has resulted as far as the United Kingdom is concerned, in no less than one million people out of the total population of I think some fifty millions, being the only owners of the soil, and the rest entirely dependent upon them for their right to live. If we judge it too by other results, we will find that it has been proved a failure in that everywhere at the present time—in Australasia, in the United Kingdom at this very time, and in the United States—we find the efforts of statesmen and legislators directed to ameliorative measures for the purpose of trying to prevent this continual tendency latent in this system—for the ownership of land to concentrate in the hands of a few. Let me quote for instance, the exact position in the United Kingdom to-day. Taking the very latest statistics available, we find that 2,500 persons own 40,426,000 acres of the soil of the United Kingdom. The total area is 77,000,000 acres, so that those 2,500 persons own a little better than one-half of the total lands of the United Kingdom. We find that 710 men own one-quarter of England, and that 70 men own one-half of Scotland, and that the great majority of the occupiers of land in the United Kingdom to-day are merely renters and not renters on terms of security, even to the extent of securing their improvements, but in many instances renters entirely dependent upon the goodwill of the landlord as to their continuance and as to the security of the improvements which they have effected. Turning to the United States we are of course dealing with a newer community, but still precisely the same process is going on, and while of course in a large country such as the United States, where considerable areas of what were previously regarded as desert lands are being reclaimed by irrigation schemes and thus making opportunities for small holders to obtain land under those schemes, we find that in the older communities in the eastern States of the United States, where to a large extent the land is filled up, there are fewer opportunities for the acquirement of land apart from that already held; and we find a continual process going on in these eastern States of a diminution in the numbers of those who are owners of the soil, and a continuous increase in the numbers who are merely renting, and, what is more significant, a continual increase of those who have mortgaged their holdings either to individual financiers or to financial institutions. This leeway in the ownership of land is, as I have said before, only compensated for by the fact of the development of the western States, but as the States are filled up and the opportunities for opening up new areas pass by, we shall find the process now characteristic of the eastern States of America becoming characteristic of the whole of that community, and that unless there is some radical alteration brought about by a popular recognition of the evils underlying the existing system, there will go on as a whole throughout the United States the continuation of this policy of the aggregation of ownership in the hands of a few to the dispossession of the many. But we are more directly and intimately concerned with conditions as they obtain in Australia and New Zealand. We have here an even newer community than the United States of America, yet our condition even at this early stage in our history, because it is an early stage, shows that we are less advantageously situated than the people of the United States of America, for we find that in the State of New South Wales 706 persons—I take these figures from the *Commonwealth Year Book*—own 40 per cent. of the total alienated area, in Victoria 415 persons own 20 per cent. of the alienated area, in South Australia 187 persons own 20 per cent. of the alienated area, and in Western Australia 299 persons own 33 per cent. of the alienated area; so we see in connection with these figures that we have reached a very serious stage in our history as a community, and that there is need for the urgent attention of legislators in order that this policy of aggregation may be arrested before it is too late. I do not want hon. members to accept my statement *ex parte*, as it will probably appear from some points of

view as being only a prejudicial recognition of the seriousness of the position. We find that in the official *Year Book* of New South Wales published in 1904-5 there were some significant remarks in connection with the position of rural settlement in its relation to land tenures in the mother State. Dealing with legislation which had preceded Sir Joseph Carruthers's epoch-marking legislation of 1895, we find this official publication commenting as follows:—

> Whatever may have been the merits of the Act of 1861, it conspicuously failed to encourage bona fide settlement; nor can it be said that the legislation of 1884 and 1889 succeeded where the original Act had failed, as the accumulation of land in large estates continued, while settlement, properly so called, proceeded very slowly. Expert opinion strongly pointed to the necessity of introducing entirely new principles into the agrarian legislation of the State, and this has been done in the Crown Lands Acts of 1895 and 1903,

and I may add in the Act of 1912,

> which not merely remedy the defects of previous legislation, but, while placing land within easy reach of all, appear to supply, by the introduction of new systems of tenure, viz., homestead selections and settlement leases, something that was needed to transform the land speculators into settlers properly so called.

Then further, from the same publication, the official *Year Book*, I take other statistical information which entirely confirms that statement. We find that taking alienated holdings according to the size, of holdings from one to 30 acres there were 24,640 with a total acreage of 190,921, constituting .09 per cent. of the area of the State, with 50,240 acres of that cultivated and showing a proportion of cultivation to the alienated area of 26.31 per cent. In the next size of holdings, 21 to 400 acres, there were 35,787 holding with a total acreage of 5,347,019, the proportion to the total area of the State being 2.73 per cent., the area cultivated being 774,597 acres or 14.49 per cent. The holdings from 401 to 1,000 acres totalled 9,011, with a total acreage of 5,718,931, the proportion to the total area being 2.92, the area cultivated being 658,776 acres, and the proportion to the area alienated being 11.52 per cent. Then of the holdings from 1,001 to 10,000 acres there were 5,512, with a total area of 13,994,182 acres, the proportion to the total area of the State being 7.14 per cent., the total acreage cultivated being 718,084 acres and the percentage to the area alienated being 5.13 per cent., and of the holdings of 10,001 acres and upwards there were 722. Yet they embraced an area of 22,830,261 acres, the proportion to the total area of the State being 11.66, the total area cultivated being only 300,159 acres, and the proportion of land cultivated to the area alienated being only 1.31 per cent. These are entirely distinct from pastoral holdings.

Hon. J. Mitchell: They have freehold pastoral holdings there.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member must know that in New South Wales the freehold pastoral holdings—*and that is where the misfortune* of that State comes in—embrace some of the finest land in the Mother State, and the pastoral holdings on leasehold are almost entirely confined to the western portion of the State which at the present time is regarded as being entirely unsuitable for cultivation. These figures show than in the smaller areas the percentage cultivated is 26.31, and as the holdings increase in size to where we get 722 holders who have 22 million acres, the percentage of area cultivated is reduced to 1.31. A position such as that was precisely the condition of things which actuated Sir Joseph Carruthers in introducing his leasehold measure in 1895, and which led to its re-enactment in 1912, a measure which I may say had the blessing of Sir Joseph Carruthers when the Bill was before the Legislative Council of New South Wales during the early part of this year. While I speak of the position in New South Wales I wish to quote a case which was urged by Sir Joseph Carruthers in 1895. He said—

We have three-fourths of our land still untouched, unalienated, virgin soil to work upon; we can put into operation sound principles of reform which mean the prevention of the repetition of the evils which have occurred in regard to one-fourth; and it is better to legislate in the way of prevention than to let the errors of the past be repeated, and then to have to come in with some drastic cure. We speak of land monopoly. Land monopoly has grown up only in regard to one-fourth of our vast heritage—three-fourths of our heritage are in the hands of no monopolist except the State itself, and any measure to cure can affect only that fourth which has been alienated; and what a noble work is imposed upon Parliament when it can adopt measures which will prevent in the future any system under which land monopoly could become an accomplished fact as regards that which remains.

Then we turn to Mr. Coghlan, at the present time Agent General for New South Wales in England.

Mr. O'Loghlen: King of them all.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Mr. Coghlan is perhaps the clearest and most conclusive writer we have yet had in connection with the statistical records of Australia. He is the author of a work which in my opinion has not been equalled by the *Commonwealth Year Book* which has taken its place. In the course of his remarks upon land settlement Mr. Coghlan draws attention to the fact that large portions of New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia were in the hands of a comparative handful of individuals or institutions, and in dealing with the question of Australasian settlement he said—

The particulars given in the foregoing pages will have made the fact abundantly clear that the main object of the land legislation, however variously expressed, has been to secure the settlement of the public estate by an industrious class, who, confining their efforts to areas of moderate extent, would thoroughly develop the resources of the land; but where the character of the country does not favour agricultural occupation or mixed farming, the laws contemplated that the State lands should be leased in blocks of considerable size for pastoral occupation, and it was hoped that by this form of settlement vast tracts which, when first opened up, seemed ill-adapted even for the sustenance of live stock, might ultimately be made available for industrial settlement. To show how small an extent the express determination of the legislators to settle an industrious peasantry on the soil was accomplished will presently be illustrated from the records of several of the provinces; but in regard to pastoral settlement the purpose was fully achieved.

In connection with the alienation for the purpose of securing settlement in moderate areas the accomplishment was small. In connection with pastoral holdings on this allegedly insecure basis of leasehold the object was fully accomplished. Mr. Coghlan goes on —

Large areas which were pronounced even by experienced explorers to be uninhabitable wilds, have since been occupied by thriving flocks, and every year sees the great Australian desert of the early explorers receding step by step.

Then he goes on to call attention to figures similar to those I have quoted from the Year Book, and he ends up with the significant statement—

The most remarkable feature of the table is that in New South Wales about one-half the alienated land is owned by 730 persons or institutions, in South Australia by 1,283, and in New Zealand by less than 500.

It may be argued in connection with these facts that if the significance of the continued aggregation of these large estates was recognised and was provided for in the legislation of New South Wales and in New Zealand, how is it that in New South Wales they receded from the position. I wish to say that in my opinion the backsliding in New South Wales was due entirely to the system of party Government from which we do not appear

to be able to make any departure, and that it was because the class directly interested in securing a change which might involve ultimate monetary benefit to themselves, apart from the power or ability to successfully exploit the soil, led to pressure being brought by a fairly influential portion of the electorate, sufficiently large, in fact, to influence the Government to act traitorously to the principles they had previously enunciated, and to effect an entire backdown from the policy they had previously pursued. Leaving New South Wales for the time and viewing the position as it obtains in Victoria, we have the same significant recognition by legislators and by Ministers of the evil results which have accrued from the system of land tenure existing up to the time the statements were made, and so far as some of the States are concerned, continuing to this day.

Hon. Frank Wilson: They never abolished freeholds in New South Wales.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They did in the Act of 1895.

Hon. Frank Wilson: For pastoral purposes, not for all purposes.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I will call the attention of the hon. member to some of the opinions of Sir Joseph Carruthers at a later stage to show what they had in view. In Victoria the present Premier, Mr. Watt, when Treasurer of that State, had occasion to introduce a land taxation measure to replace the rather hybrid form of taxation dignified by the name of land tax. Admittedly the object of this tax was in the first place to secure revenue and secondly, in order to effect a distribution of the large area of land in that State, and to secure closer settlement. Probably Mr. Watt, in the course of his fervent advocacy of the measure which he was introducing hardly realised that, in attacking his predecessors for omitting to introduce any such measure of land taxation, he was also attacking most vigorously the system of land tenure which had been responsible for that parlous condition of affairs. Probably, he has not realised it even to this day. In the course of his remarks, he dealt exhaustively with the condition of land settlement in Victoria. He pointed out that, although the Government were purchasing areas for closer settlement and trying by safeguarding the provisions of the Bill to continue that closer settlement in future, yet in spite of that fact, and in spite of the cutting up of some estates through private agencies, they were not effecting the same increase in the number of cultivators of the soil: and while, on the one hand, this repurchasing was bringing new settlers upon the soil, yet, on the other hand, in other areas which had been alienated under the old land laws which sought to secure this establishment of a peasantry working on moderate areas, the evil of aggregation had gone on. He quoted a number of figures, with which I do not propose to weary the House, when showing how this was effected. But more significant still, he quoted details in connection with the growth of population of the rural districts, as compared with the growth of population in large urban centres, and while, on the one hand, the county of Bourke, which includes practically the metropolitan area of Melbourne, was showing a substantial increase in its population, large areas, some of those in which irrigation works had been established as a result of the expenditure of large sums of money, actually evidenced a decrease of population. In no instance that he quoted was the increase in any way proportionate to the general increase of population in the State. For instance, he said that in Bunyip, in the shire of Berwick, the population in 1891 was greater than in 1901 by 221 per cent.; in Enfield, in Buninyong, in 1891 the population was greater than in 1901 by 145 per cent.; in the locality of Devenish, in the shire of Benalla, it was 87 per cent. greater; in Crossley, in the shire of Belfast, it was 73 per cent. greater; and in Rutherglen, 72 per cent. In Sunbury (exclusive of the asylum and all its entails), in the shire of Bulla and Melton, it was 49 per cent. greater. Even in those places where an increase was shown, he points out, it is insignificant in comparison with the growth of popu-

lation in the urban centres, illustrating the drift of population from the country to the towns, mainly through the building up of large estates to the detriment of the original cultivators of the soil. For instance, he points out that Dalhousie should have 31,000; it has only 20,000. Talbo should have 101,000; it has only 58,000. Normanby should have 17,000; it has only 11,000. Karra Karra should have 24,000; it has only 16,000. Gladstone should have 29,000; it has only 18,000. And so he quotes a number of the farming portions of the State, illustrating the unfortunate tendency for the speculative element to creep in, inducing an aggregation of estates, and the consequent influx of the agricultural population into the cities—a condition of things which has been paralleled during the last century in the United Kingdom, and which has converted her from a community having a substantial agricultural population, from a community whose yeoman and peasantry were once her pride and the foundation of her defence forces, into to-day what is largely a manufacturing nation, dependent for her food supplies upon communities entirely apart from her. Even if we come to our own State of Western Australia we find that no less a person than the leader of the Opposition was responsible for noting this same tendency, even in this new community of ours, because in introducing the land tax in 1906 he expressed then the pious hope that, while it produced revenue, it would also have some effect in bringing large estates into use, and justified it also from the standpoint that almost everywhere in the civilised world attention was being drawn to this source of taxation, more from the point of view of coping with the evils that had grown up under the system of land tenure that obtained, than from the point of view of raising much needed revenue. Whilst, perhaps, the hon. member had in mind no idea of delivering a dissertation on the evils of our system of land tenure his remarks in introducing that Bill were, nevertheless, a criticism of the measures which were responsible for the conditions he deplored growing up in Western Australia in common with other communities. At that time the hon. gentleman displayed a wide knowledge of political economists on the important question of the relationship of land to the general welfare of the community, and one can only regret that his knowledge is not used in the direction of remedying these evils rather than, for the time being, and probably for party objects, for the purpose of perpetuating them.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Give me the credit for using my knowledge in the right direction.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, at that time. We find that in nearly every State measures have to be taken for the correction of these evils, and probably the one most favoured, because it is the one which meets with least opposition from vested interests, is the repurchase of large estates for the purpose of closer settlement. Whilst we are at such a stage in our development that these estates can be secured at a fairly reasonable price, although in nearly every instance that price has embodied a fairly considerable percentage of unearned increment, we do not feel or experience the evils which are inherent even in that method of correcting the defects of our system of land tenure, because if we can repurchase the land at a fairly low price, it means that those who purchase it have a reasonable opportunity of paying the price and making a comfortable livelihood. But, if with the continuance of our system, bringing about as it inevitably must, an enhanced price of land, apart from any value of the improvements on the land, we have to pay continually an increased price, it means that we have merely to pass on to those who purchase that land a burden, which I am afraid they will find almost too grievous to bear. There are one or two instances in Western Australia where, I am afraid, those who have taken up repurchased land will, owing to the price they had to pay for it, experience many pioneering difficulties before they can call themselves successful tillers of the soil. In Victoria, it is as well to point out, while legislators there have burked proposals for

dealing with the evil thoroughly, they have sought by roundabout means to accomplish the same thing, because under their closer settlement Acts they now provide in the deeds, which are issued for freehold, what is called a limited freehold, a limitation being provided that the holding, even after the full instalments are paid and the deed is issued, can only be sold to an individual who is not already the holder of land. While the efforts of those who have secured those areas have been directed for some time past towards having this eliminated, yet the Victorian Government, though they have given way in every other respect to the representations of vested interests, have recognised that they must stand firm on this particular clause, because if they remove that limitation in the title of their so-called freeholds, they will have destroyed the ultimate efficacy of their closer settlement policy. It was recognised by Mr. Watt in this very speech, when he pointed out that even on the repurchased estates the aggregation has gone on. It has gone on in New South Wales and in Western Australia, and in this State there are instances where we have repurchased land, have cut it up for closer settlement and sold it, and again repurchased it at an advanced price, and once more made it available for closer settlement. Indeed, there are cases to-day where we have on offer closer settlement estates which were carved out of areas previously cut up for closer settlement. How is it possible to continue a suicidal policy of that kind, and at the same time keep the State solvent, and give our farmers a chance of success? It may be asked what is the explanation of this failure? When we have taken the step of buying back a large estate, cutting it up, and making it available on as favourable terms as possible in regard to length of time for payment, consistent, of course, with the financial stability of the scheme—that is, securing to the tax-payers a return of the purchase money with interest and sinking fund—how is it we find the evil again cropping up, involving the necessity at a later date of again repurchasing and at a still greater price, with a view to cutting it up once more? I regard this result as being due entirely to the fact that our system of land tenure imparts a speculative, as opposed to a productive value, to our land. We acquiesce in the idea that the deed, embodying what we are pleased to term our freehold title, gives to the holder of that land an absolute right, regardless entirely of the interests of the community. That is not an accepted canon of British law, because Blackstone, in his *Commentaries* lays it down that there is no absolutely private right in land, that in the last analysis the ownership of the land rests in the Crown —of course in the Crown as representative of the nation. But what is the use of us piously proclaiming that the ultimate ownership is in the Crown, when in all our legislation and in our discussion of all these problems of land tenure and of taxation we continually adhere to a practical declaration on the part of land owners of absolute ownership in defiance of the community or in defiance of the Crown —piously proclaiming one thing but practically admitting otherwise? It is the fact that it is regarded as a chattel from which profit can be made by selling it to others who are in need of land, that has led, in my opinion, to this insane desire for the aggregation of large areas to the exclusion of any consideration of the needs of the general community; because, after all, no matter how our population expands or increases, no matter how the number of those who are desirous of becoming the tillers of the soil increases, the area of the land available does not increase one jot; and as the population butts up, as it were, against the boundaries of the land, as the intensity of the demand for land increases, these holders find that they can secure enhanced prices for the land apart from any effort or energy which they may direct to the improvement of that land. That is why in Western Australia we find numbers of men in the first place, legitimately enough, desirous of developing the land and making a farm of it, but still always reaching out for more than they can develop, double or treble what they can develop and double or treble what they will ever be able to develop

in their lifetime or in their children's lifetime, and paying instalments on it to the Crown only because they believe that ultimately, if the need arises, they can sell and realise something more than the value which they themselves impart to the land. Probably the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) and other members know of scores of cases in this State where men have more land taken up from the State than they can possibly develop, and that is the only explanation I can offer why, in their early struggles to establish a home and a farm, they continue to pay for a considerable area they allow to remain unused, and which will remain unused all their lifetime. It is only because they hope to be able to reap a speculative value from the growth of population and the increase of settlers and would-be settlers who will pay that price and help them to realise it. It is an opinion often heard, and not infrequently from the member for Northam, that an increase in the value of land is a good thing for the community, that it is a splendid thing to see the values of land increasing. While I admit it is a good thing if that increase in value is value imparted by the improvements effected by the owner of the land, on the other hand if that increase of value is due entirely to the growth and demands of population, then it is a bad thing; because every time the price increases it restricts the number of those who can hope to take up a holding and successfully develop it, and the inevitable result—and I can understand the standpoint from which the member for Northam supports it—is resort to mortgages and to the financial institutions. That is the undoubted result, because it means that the man seeking to obtain a farm for himself, before he can even hope to spend a pound in improvements and in the purchase of implements, has to pay the price of the land, the unearned increment to the previous holder, and very often to get that money he has to go to the financial institutions and mortgage his future; and the higher the price of the land—I mean the speculative price—the greater the holding of the financial institutions and the more frequently these financial institutions will step in and secure that land by reason of the failure of the owner to pull through under the burdens imposed on him. That is why in 1902, in the culminating year of the drought that affected the Eastern States, and on every occasion when we have a big drought in Australia, hundreds, nay, thousands, of farmers and pastoralists have gone under, and their holdings, previously held individually, perhaps supporting hundred of families, have drifted into the hands of financial institutions; and that is why the individual squatter owning the improvements on his pastoral lease has given place to the representative manager of the financial institution whether it be bank, mortgage or finance company. That would have been the result in Western Australia in this last year through which we have passed had it not been for the fact that a Government was in power which determined to see that help should be given and that these people should not go under, because there were those looking forward to the time when they could pick up cheap properties. They have said to me in the train that it is a foolish thing to go along and take up land in its virgin state from the Crown and put money into developing it, because a man will be able to get land from those fellows who go under and cannot pull through. Fortunately, in many instances we were able to pull them through; and that is how on that occasion we were able by our administration, to mitigate the effects that would ensue from the fact that these holdings were mortgaged to financial institutions. It is just on such occasions, at the time of the greatest stress of difficulty, that these institutions are most prone to ask people to pay up, and, failing the paying up, to sell up and hunt those owing the money and unable to pay out into the world.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Do you not think a good many of the commercial houses helped them to pull through to a much greater extent than the Government?

Mr. O'Loghlen: And charged ten per cent. for it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: One other result of the growth of speculative

value is the increase, even at this early stage in our development, of the class of tenant farmers and those who farm under the share principle; and unless by our legislative measures we arrest this, unless we can go to the root causes and legislate in such a way as to remove those root causes, we must inevitably follow in the direction of the United Kingdom and the United States of America and build up a gradually increasing class of tenant farmers, as opposed to those who hold their own land and the improvements thereon.

Mr. Green: Our children will have to leave here as our fathers had to leave England.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have already pointed out that in every community ameliorating and mitigating measures are undertaken by the Governments to try to stem this evil, and I have pointed out how in many instances they have ended either in partial failure or in complete failure. As a matter of fact, the only measure which has succeeded where it has been attempted has been the adoption of the principle embodied in this Bill submitted to-night. Take, for instance, the position in New South Wales. I have already referred to the pregnant remarks of Sir Joseph Carruthers when introducing the amending Land Bill embodying the leasehold principle in 1905, and I wish now to quote some of the results as compared with the result of settlement under the conditional purchase system—

> Since 1861 there have been 168,140 valid conditional purchases. Now, what do those conditional purchases imply? That they have been taken up for the purposes of forming homes for the selectors—the very intention of the authors of the Act, as embodied in the words of the statutes themselves, which impose residential conditions as conditions precedent to the issue of a grant. We have 168,000 of these residential conditional purchases, covering an area of 22,000,000 acres, together with 12,000,000 acres of conditional leases, with pre-emptive rights attaching to these conditional purchases—a total area, covered by these conditional purchases, of 35,000,000 acres. What was the result? The total number of increased occupants of the rural lands of this colony—the heads of families holding their occupations—since the Act of 1861 is only 25,760 settlers. So that 168,000 selectors are represented by 25,000 increased occupants at the present time.

Hon. J. Mitchell: They have not much more than 1,000 acres each.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The maximum area was under that; in many instances it is 640 acres in New South Wales.

Hon. Frank Wilson: It is too small; they could not make a living on it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Those were the figures produced from official sources by Sir Joseph Carruthers in 1905. And they were brought up to date in 1910 by Mr. Neilsen, the then Minister for Lands. In the course of his speech on a vote of censure against the Government he said—

> I want to show that the very figures used by Mr. Carruthers on that occasion, if brought up to date, will speak with a stronger voice than they ever spoke before in the history of New South Wales. Up to the present moment there have been alientated 201,732 conditional purchases, containing 28,897,700 acres, with associated conditional leases amounting to another 15,000,000 or 16,000,000 acres. Listen to the result. There are 201,732 conditional purchases sold, each one of which, when sold, was supposed to carry a man, to carry a sturdy yeoman, who would be on the land to defend it from foreign invasion. There have been, besides that, 150,000 other land transactions with regard to the alienations of country lands. The total number of land transactions is 351,732 with regard to our country lands, some of which were conditional purchases, and some of which were large blocks of land sold by public auction, and by other forms of sale up to the present moment. Listen to these figures. The total result of these 351,732 land transactions, each one of which was supposed to result in a settler being placed on the soil, I

will now give you. I am about to state the number of settlers on the soil to-day in areas between 50 and 3,000 acres. Of course, everyone knows that there cannot be any conditional purchases of a greater area than 2,560 acres, and I am taking the area of 3,000 acres, because I cannot get figures for the smaller area. The total result of all these alienations by conditional purchases and sale is that we have 42,489 settlers. (An Hon. Member: What is the date of these figures?) Since 1861. There are 42,489 settlers as a result of 351,732 land transactions.

Mr. Neilsen goes on to say—

Let us look at the system introduced by Mr. Carruthers, this much condemned system of homestead selection and settlement lease. We find that under that system there have been 8,792 land transactions, and the total result to-day in actual settlement has been 7,285 actual settlers. That is the difference between the old alienation policy, as pursued from 1861 right up to the present moment, and this leasing policy, which is supposed to be condemnable because it has some effect upon the people who happen to hold these blocks of land.

But these figures of Mr. Nielsen's were entirely confirmed by Sir Joseph Carruthers from his place in the Upper House. During this very speech of Mr. Neilsen's which I have been reading there were constant interjections from the Liberal ranks asking him what were Sir Joseph Carruthers' opinions now; and even Mr. Neilsen himself was evidently of the opinion that Sir Joseph Carruthers had changed, because he made reference to the fact that whatever views Sir Joseph Carruthers held now it did not detract from the statesmanlike position he took up in introducing the Act of 1895: "But in the course of his speech in the Upper House on the Labour party's policy submitted in 1912, and which is now law, Sir Joseph Carruthers made some very trenchant remarks. He said—

During the controversies in the country and in Parliament I have sat silent. I remember last Parliament that a Bill was introduced by the Government of which Mr. Wade was the head. That was the Conversion Bill. I very well remember what the hon. and learned member, Mr. Ashton, said here, and in which I concurred. The proposition to allow the settlement lessees to convert their leaseholds into freeholds was a direct gift of millions of pounds to the people beyond what we had ever contemplated. I regard the Conversion Act as going to a wicked extreme in legislation in order to pander to the cry for a freehold, and to give lessees, who have the right to hold under the settlement lease provisions areas up to 10,000 acres, the right of conversion. Settlement leases were designed by me as leases to precede settlement, and not to give a man the right to convert an area of country like that, when we have a mere handful of people here, and the areas might be required hereafter as a site for towns and cities.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Is that Ashton speaking?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, Sir Joseph Carruthers. He is referring to Mr. Ashton's remarks made at the time of the passage of the Conversion Bill. Then, further, he makes some appreciative remarks justifying and proving the wisdom of the measure which he had introduced in 1895. He points out that, after all, despite the drawbacks of other national circumstances which should be taken into consideration, the feudal idea of land tenure was probably the best ever England has seen in her history, because the underlying principle of the feudal system was the recognition of the responsibility of the component parts, the Crown, the baron, and the commoner, to the community generally, and that land could only be held for use, and with due recognition of the duty of the user to the community; and all Great Britain's difficulties in regard to land tenure have arisen from the fact that in the reign of Charles II. a corrupt king permitted the obligations of the nobility to be laid aside, imposed in lieu thereof taxation on the people and permitted the nobility to take from the

great mass of the people as rent what had previously been paid through the nobility to the king as taxes. And Sir Joseph Carruthers pointed out that he had sought in his Bill of 1895 to embody that principle, that full security of tenure was given for the productive use of the land, absolute security in regard to whatever improvements a man might effect, security also in that the terms were easy and light and in no sense prohibitive. Underlying his Bill there was the recognition of the obligation of the land holder to the general community, and of the necessity at stages in the history of any particular community for such a readjustment which would enable the whole of the community, whether as direct users of the soil, or as those dependent upon them, to be secured in the enjoyment of comfortable and adequate means of life. And in summing up the result of his measure he said—

> We have here so much agitation against this old system that people never pause to consider what good it did to this country. Since 1895 we have alienated, excluding settlement leases, 3,500,000 acres—that is, by new applications. That is a very small area compared to the area of 40,000,000 acres which we alienated from 1861 to 1894. Only 3,500,000 acres from 1895 to the present time. Settlement lease applications ran to 7,500,000 acres, and but for the unfortunate legislation of the last Parliament that would not have been in process of alienation now. We have put on that area 25,000 additional families. We put just as many families on the land for the alienation of 3,500,000 acres in a period of seventeen years as we did in thirty-four years prior with the alienation of 40,000,000 acres.

Or thirteen times as much. Now, where could you have a better, clearer proof of the beneficial results of a measure which, while it discouraged speculative selection of the soil, gave every encouragement to the productive occupation of it? He goes on to say —

> Nor does it stop there. The area under crop and cultivation in 1894—and cropping shows use of land—was 1,394,000 acres; and in 1911 there were 3,381,000 acres under crop or cultivation. We nearly trebled the area under cultivation.

Then he goes on to refer to some particular districts in which settlement took place under the tenure of 1895. He says—

> Look at Coolamon, which was the first area I dealt with. Gobbagombalin was the first run I subdivided on the homestead selection principle. When it was thrown open there was a timber mill at Coolamon, and a little railway siding for timber. To-day there is a prosperous town, wholly and solely created by the properous settlers. That was the Gobbagombalin estate. Look at all the Riverina plains. It is occupied by a class of men who are making that district the granary for the whole of Australia.

These remarks are in my opinion probably the best evidence we could have, coming as they do from one associated with a party in bitter opposition to the Government which introduced the measure he was approving, and in these circumstances, and having regard to the details which he quoted, they are the best justification which I can urge as to the advantage of the system embodied in this Bill to secure what should be the object of every member of the House, namely the productive occupation of the soil and the limitation of area to the amount which the individual settler can conveniently use and develop to a reasonable extent.

Hon. Frank Wilson : What is the Labour Government of New South Wales going to do now about this business ?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS : They have carried it.

Hon. Frank Wilson : They have not done away with the freehold.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS : Yes, absolutely. Probably the hon. member is not in possession of the Bill introduced in the early part of this year, but I have a copy of it, and will be glad to supply him with it. Now I desire to deal with some misconceptions which undoubtedly exist in regard to this measure, and some of the arguments which are urged against

it. In the first place we are continually told that it means insecurity of tenure, but the evidence I have just adduced as to the actual results of the system in operation is the best that I can produce to show, on the contrary, that it is the best guarantee we have of security of tenure, because it means that while the holder has a continued obligation to the Crown, representing the community, he is never in danger to the same extent that the freehold owner is, in that his title, no matter how good it may be declared to be by the advocates of freehold, is usually not in his own possession but in the possession of some bank or financial institution. The security is found in that the lessee has a much better chance of success. Under the Bill which I am submitting to-night the selector of land under that system will have a much better chance of winning success than under the previous system which has been in force, because it will mean he will be able to utilise his capital in the development of the land and in the improvements which make his land productive. Then we are told that we are merely placing the selector in the position of tenant and are only perpetuating the relationship of the landlord and tenant, which has been found so injurious in the old communities of the world. But there is a very vital distinction between the position of the Crown representing the community as landlord, and the position as between the private landlord and the tenant. The advantages of the Crown being the landlord are the easy terms upon which the land is given, the security of tenure, the security for improvements, and the recognition that the annual payment represents the economic rental which we seek to secure by the land tax, and from his freedom from the payment of land tax. Then, again, he is in an entirely different position from the tenant of a private landlord, because what he pays in his annual contribution to the private landlord goes into the pocket of one individual, but what he pays to the Crown goes into the pockets of the community, and is used for the erection of schools, for the construction of railways, and for the payment of interest and sinking fund charges on existing railways, and it means that, while the individual burden is light, it will be a continuously increasing sum and will be strictly revenue as distinct from what the major portion of land revenue is to-day, that is encroachment upon the capital of the community. Then we are told that the strongest argument that can be urged against leasehold tenure is that, wherever it has been tried, and wherever it has been enforced the leaseholders as a body make a demand for the grant of the freehold. It is not entirely true, but I will admit it is true of a considerable proportion of those who secure land under the leasehold tenure. If the community were prepared to admit it, we can recognise why the demand is made, because the leasehold tenant of the Crown is just as desirous of getting something for nothing as any other member of the community, and if he finds the Government so soft, so regardless of the interests of the community as a whole, as to bend to such a demand then one can understand and can explain an agitation being set on foot, in order to secure a grant of the freehold, because immediately it is granted we at once give to those who demand it the opportunity of securing a speculative value, and we give them the opportunity of securing something regardless of the interests of other members of the community. Freehold is demanded for the same reason that the land tax is imposed, because these people desire to enjoy the unearned increment. But I want to state very emphatically that in connection with any legislation dealing with land tenure, it is not a matter to be determined by those who are actually occupying the land; it is a matter vitally affecting the whole of the community, and, therefore, to be determined by the whole of the community; and I hope we shall never see the time when the interests of the whole community will be sacrificed by any Government out of a desire to secure votes from one section of the community who might be making a demand for the advantage of their own pockets,

but which is entirely opposed to the interests of the community.

Mr. Monger: Will you make your own properties leasehold?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The leasehold, as I have said before, is actual revenue, not as so much of it is to-day, diminution of capital, and it will avoid an evil which has seriously handicapped us in the past, and which has involved much greater expense for many public undertakings than would otherwise have been occasioned by the fact that we have had to pay so much for the resumption of land for public purposes. We have had to pay not only what has been expended by the owner in improvements, but we have had to pay, and pay heavily often, to the extent of robbery sometimes, value which has been imparted by the community; and it is a vicious principle that first the growing needs of the community impart high values to land, particularly in the metropolitan areas, and when the needs of the community arise they have to be taxed in order to pay for the values which they themselves have created.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: The system of freehold is based on robbery—robbery under arms.

Hon. Frank Wilson: We all take advantage of it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I want to deal briefly with the main provisions of this measure. In the first place, we embody in the form of a schedule to the Bill the regulations already in force for the leasing of town and suburban lands, and I may say that there is a growing demand for the areas in various parts of the State, issued under the new system which we have adopted in connection with these areas, and only recently a sale of the leasehold rights in some new townsites of about 12 blocks realised over £200.

Mr. Monger: Over the upset price?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is the premium price. We find that in many other centres the leaseholds are being taken up freely, and I think members on both sides of the House will agree that it is a wise thing, particularly with regard to town and suburban lots where the increment of value increases so much, that in this early stage in the history of Western Australia we should protect ourselves, and while, perhaps, not realising so much revenue as if we sold outright for the time being, protecting the future interests of the people and securing to the people in the future the community-value imparted by the growth of these towns and the general development of the country.

Hon. Frank Wilson: I suppose those people you refer to had no options of the freehold?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No. In connection with agricultural land, we are providing for a division into first and second class land, and providing that the rental shall be two per cent. on the capital unimproved value, provision, of course, being made for a valuation of improvements which may happen to be on some of the blocks made available, and which we take power to provide for either in immediate payment in some instances or by instalments spread over a considerable time in other cases. We provide that the first three years' term of the holding shall be free of rental, that is in the case of unimproved Crown lands.

Hon. Frank Wilson: How are you going to find the capital unimproved value?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We have always been able to find it in the past and I anticipate no difficulty in finding it in the future.

Hon. Frank Wilson: What will you base it on?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: On the value apart from improvements.

Hon. Frank Wilson: But what will the value be based on?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We have no difficulty whatever in finding it at present.

Hon. Frank Wilson: At present you find it on the selling price. Are you going to continue that?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: How do you mean?

Hon. Frank Wilson: To find the value.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We will take the general acceptance of the value which is current in the district. For instance, I have knowledge of a block

of land which at the present time is vacant in a particular locality where my farm is situated. All around it are improved homes. We can easily arrive at the value. I have no difficulty in determining the value of the improvements on my block, and the unimproved value of land in that particular locality of fairly equal quality as regards fertility will be the value that block will sell at in its unimproved condition.

Hon. Frank Wilson: When you have it all leasehold, where will you get a selling value?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member has had to find the unimproved value of land for taxation purposes.

Hon. Frank Wilson: I can do it because I believe in selling it. Will not the value go up directly you cease selling other land?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, I think it is the easiest thing in the world, when one has a clear conception of what is meant by unimproved value, to determine the value of that land apart from the improvements.

Hon. Frank Wilson: It is fixed on the selling price.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There are tens of thousands of selections being made available in new areas where there is no selling value, and the unimproved value is determined day after day.

Hon. Frank Wilson: On the selling price in other localities?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We will still have that to guide us. The hon. member is raising a bogey that presents no difficulties at all.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You cannot have a selling price if you do not sell land.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member raises difficulties, but I expect to have the administration of this measure and I can see no difficulties whatever. We are providing that the first three years shall be rent free, subject to the condition that the holder must expend in improvements on his holding the amount he would otherwise spend in rent. On application he will pay the first year's rent, which will be practically held in trust, and when he fulfils improvements in that year over and above the prescribed improvements required that money will be returned to him, and each year after that. So long as he fulfils the prescribed improvement conditions, which in my opinion are equitable, he will be free from rent and be able to expend the money in the development and improvement of his holding in order to make it productive.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Will he be taxed?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, he will be exempt from taxation. In connection with the improvements under the conditions applying to first-class agricultural land, after the second year half the prescribed improvements must take the form of clearing and cropping, but in the case of second-class land we take power to substitute stocking with cattle or sheep in place of cropping. We are providing a new departure here in connection with grazing leases, that is they are to be actual leases and not grazing leases under conditional purchase as are now provided. They are to be merely grazing runs similar to those in New South Wales and New Zealand. By this measure we can now deal with lands outside the limits of what may be termed safe agricultural development, and it will give opportunities for the future development of lands which I hope will encourage an element of small grazing-run owners running a smaller number of sheep than the average pastoralist does now, and thus leading to closer development and bigger population under grazing conditions than we have at present. In connection with the poison lands, of which we have a considerable area, and which require a development policy, we are providing that these may be taken up, and that for ten years they will be rent free, thus giving to the holder the opportunity of utilising his capital in contending with the poison and making the land fit as a grazing proposition primarily, though, I hope, ultimately with a view to cultivation.

Mr. Dooley: Under conditions of improvement?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Undoubtedly, that is one of the conditions. The holder must expend so much in improvements, and in addition he must expend what otherwise would be paid in rent as improvements on the holding. We have a considerable area at present which is not taken up for which there is a demand if some easy tenure of settlement is devised, and I consider this proposal of ours will lead to a considerable area of these poison lands being taken up under the very liberal terms we provide. The provision in regard to the maximum area which may be held is one that will probably arouse some criticism from hon. members, in that they may regard it as too small a maximum for a farm in Western Australia; but I am of opinion that if a farmer has 1,000 acres of first-class land he has a pretty considerable task to develop that to the full extent it may be developed even in Western Australia. In my opinion it is much preferable to have close development of an area of 1,000 acres than to have imperfect development of 2,000 acres. We provide that 2,000 acres of second-class land may be taken up, and in addition to the 1,000 acres that may be taken up of first-class land, 500 acres may be taken up by the settler's wife. We provide also that holders of existing conditional purchases may convert to the leasehold form of tenure, but in view of the fact that a larger maximum has been permitted under our existing land laws, we do not propose to limit the conditional purchase holder, who has a desire to convert, to the maximum prescribed in the Bill; he will be permitted to convert the whole of his area to a holding under this Bill. These are the main provisions of the measure. Of course more explanation can be advanced when the Bill is in the Committee stage, but before concluding I wish to say that it is a pleasure to me to have the opportunity of introducing this measure, and to demonstrate to the country that the absurd and wicked canards published, that our proposals were robbery and confiscation, have been proved to be the falsehoods we at the time declared they were. We declared we had no desire, and in this Bill we show we have no desire to repudiate any rights or any contracts the Crown has entered into, but we do think that in dealing with the very large portion of our public estate—something like 97 per cent.—which still remains in the hands of the Crown, it is much better to devise a measure of this kind than to permit the previous system to continue, and, after having gone through the process of alienation under our land laws, to later on in the history of the State have to devise all these measures and all this legislation and bump up against all the vested interests in our efforts to minimise and remove the evils we have ourselves created. How absurd it is for us first by the policy we have hitherto pursued to create these difficulties and then later on to go through a long process of legislation, whether it be in the shape of restrictive land legislation or in the shape of land taxation, both equally unpopular, to try to remedy the evils we create. Rather in my opinion is it better to face the difficulties now when we have a large portion of the public estate still in our possession, and devise such means for making that estate available so as to prevent the difficulties cropping up and eliminate the necessity in the future for having to deal with these difficulties as they arise and legislate as in the other States of Australia. I believe under this system we provide a means by which the landless man with limited capital at his disposal can obtain an area of land sufficient for his livelihood and sufficient to maintain him and his family in comfortable circumstances, so long as he regards it as land provided for his productive occupation and for his use in order that he may add to the prosperity of the community, and not as a means of trafficking or speculation. We have provided means in this Bill by which he can utilise his energy and his capital, not in expenditure in the purchase of a piece of parchment to entitle him to the land, but rather to expend his capital, feeling sure that the ultimate results of his energies will secure to him, in putting the whole of his capital into the development of the

soil, a sure means of living for himself and his family.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. T. Walker): I second the motion.

Hon. Frank Wilson: It will not last five years if you pass it.

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

House adjourned at 9.40 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 29th October, 1912.

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

QUESTION — POWELLISED SLEEPERS, COST.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Has the attention of the Government been drawn to a statement made by the Minister for Home Affairs (Mr. King O'Malley) in the House of Representatives on Wednesday last, to the effect that the Commonwealth Government is not concerned with the cost of powellising karri sleepers for the Trans-Australian Railway, this being purely a matter for the successful tenderer—the Western Australian Government? 2, Is this statement correct? 3, If so, has an agreement been made between the Western Australian Government and the powellising company in regard to royalty and other charges? 4, What royalty is to be paid? 5, On what basis is such royalty to be paid? 6, What other charges, if any, are to be made by the powellising company?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, 2, and 3, Yes. 4, 1s. 3d. per 100 superficial feet. 5, See No. 4. 6, None.

QUESTION—OBSERVATORY SITE.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY asked the Colonial Secretary: As the Government have requested the Federal Government to take over the Observatory as from January next,—1, Is it the intention of the Government to transfer therewith the whole of the lands known as the Observatory reserve? 2, Will the Government consider the desirability of preserving this reserve to the State by shifting the Observatory to a smaller and less valuable site before transferring it to the Commonwealth Government?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1 and 2, No definite reply has been received by the Government to the request that the Commonwealth Government should take over the work of the Observatory. When a reply has been received the matters contained in the questions will be taken into consideration.

PAPER PRESENTED.

Reports and returns under the Government Railways Act, 1904, for the quarter ended 30th September.

BILL—NATIVE FLORA PROTECTION.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Legislative Assembly.

BILL—PEARLING.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 24th October: Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair, the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.