The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I move an amendment—

That in line 6 of Subclause 2 the word "five" be struck out, and "seven" inserted in lieu.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 20 to 28—agreed to.

Clause 29—Amendment of Municipal Corporations Act and Road Districts Act:

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Here we have another misprint. We get the year 1927 instead of the year 1928. I move an amendment—

That in line 6 "1927" be struck out, and "1928" inserted in lieu.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 30 to 33—agreed to.

First Schedule:

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I move an amendment—

That in Clause 7, para. (e), line 2, the word "nine" be struck out, and "eleven" inserted in lieu.

Amendment put and passed; the Schedule, as amended, agreed to.

Second Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments

House adjourned at 10.13 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 4th December, 1928.

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

QUESTION—PILOTAGE ACCIDENTS, FREMANTLE.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON asked the Honorary Minister: 1, Will he furnish the name of the pilot or pilots in charge of the vessels referred to by him in his second reading speech on the introduction of the Harbours and Jetties Bill? 2, Was an inquiry made by any competent or other authority regarding the various accidents referred to, and, if so, by whom and what was the result of each inquiry so held? 3, Will he also furnish a list of vessels which were in charge of pilots and which suffered or caused damage within the limits of Fremantle harbour during the last five years, and specify brief details of nature and extent of damage and names of pilot or pilots in charge of each vessel? 4, By whom, and on whose recommendation, were the respective pilots appointed?

The CHIEF SECRETARY (for the Honorary Minister) replied: The information sought by the hon. member has been prepared in the form of a return, which I now lay on the Table of the House.

MAIN ROADS BOARD ADMINISTRATION—SELECT COMMITTEE.

Extension of Time.

On motion by Hon. H. Seddon, the time for bringing up the select committee's report was extended to the 18th December.

BILL—QUARRY RAILWAY EXTENSION.

Read a third time and passed.

BILL—ELECTORAL DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 29th November.

The CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central—in reply) [4.35]: Mr. Harris, in the course of his criticism, read extracts from what purported to be a speech delivered by the Premier (Hon. P. Collier) at Boulder in 1924. The object of the hon. member in presenting the quotation was to prove that the Premier in placing this Bill before Parliament, had been inconsistent with his former professions. He credited

Mr. Collier with having said that the Labour Party stood for the principle of one man one vote, but that in the Bill introduced by the Mitchell Government, they would have one district with 1,000 electors and another with 6,000. I do not know whether the figures for which the Premier is held responsible were correct or not. Pretty good evidence of their accuracy, however, is to be found in the fact that they are not disputed by Mr. Harris. On the other hand, he lays the foundation of his case on them. But that is as far as he gets. If he had shown —which he did not do—that in this Bill—apart from the North-West electorates—1,000 electors were to have as much political power as 6,000—there would have been some relevancy in his remarks. The hon. member's grievance can be summed up in a few words. He complains that the central goldfields should have three seats instead of four, and that the outer goldfields should have five seats instead of four; and he complains also that the proposal in the Bill to take five seats from the goldfields and give them to the metropolitan area, is robbing the agricultural districts of five, or portion of the five, seats, which should go to them. It is very difficult to follow the hon. member. In the first place he accuses the Government of robbing the agricultural districts to serve the metropolitan area, and then he winds up by stating that "The question every elector has to ask himself is: Will he have an equitable voice in the representation of his district under this Bill? If such a question were addressed to an elector in any part of the metropolitan area, his reply would be—if he followed Mr. Harris's line of reasoning—that, even under this Bill, he is not getting an equitable voice in the representation of his district. For, under the Bill, 108,000 electors will have only 17 members, while 86,000 electors in the country will have 21 members. I do not say that there is anything wrong in that. In fact, I hold that one vote one value could not be made to apply with justice in a State with a scattered population like Western Australia. I am merely making the comparison in order to show where Mr. Harris's arguments rise up and strike him, and how inconsistent they are! Mr. Harris thinks that Kalgoorlie and Boulder have been too generously treated in being included in the mining and pastoral area. Judging from the case he put up against them, they should have the same quota as the metropolitan area. His chief concern for the time being seems to be for the agricultural areas.

Hon. E. H. Harris: I said it was unfair to the outer goldfields.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member's grievance was that the central areas of the goldfields had too much representation, and the agricultural areas had not sufficient. If the Bill discloses, as Mr. Harris tells us it does, that the bump of self-preservation is highly developed in the Collier Government, then, if his speech is any guide, Mr. Harris's bump of benevolence has swollen almost to bursting point, for he seems to have a greater concern for other parts of the State than he has for his own districts.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: That shows his statesmanship!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Harris evidently wants a new quota—higher than the present one—for Kalgoorlie and Boulder. It seems to me that there is greater reason for a higher quota for those agricultural districts which are quite close to the metropolitan area. Swan, for instance, is practically part of the metropolitan area, and Northam is only a three hours' run by train to the capital. I might well ask why have they the same quota as Geraldton and Greenough which are over 300 miles away. But we would require a dozen different quotas to meet everyone's desires, and we should please no one in the end. Everyone knows that Kalgoorlie and Boulder are not the great centres of population they once were. On the Kalgoorlie roll, there are only 3,536 electors, and on Boulder, only 2,346. Why they should be cut out of the general mining area, as Mr. Harris suggests, it is difficult to understand. There is community of interest between them and the other mining centres, and there is distance from the capital—such distance as would probably involve the expenditure of £30 or £40 to bring a deputation to Perth, to interview a Minister. Mr. Harris seems to be very sore because the five seats taken from the goldfields are to be given to the metropolitan area. If my memory is not deceiving me, I have been told times out of number in this House—it has been said and repeated and repeated again—that it was a gross political scandal, that electorates could be counted in their tens of thousands

in the metropolitan area, while in the mining districts they could be counted only in their hundreds. And Mr. Harris took a leading voice in that outcry! He spoke bitterly of Menzies and Hannans having each a member, while the poor unfortunate citizens of Perth and its suburbs had not as many as they ought to have. Lest I should be accused of misrepresenting Mr. Harris, let me read what he said in August of last year. He was speaking on the Address-in-reply, and his remarks will be found on page 381 of "Hansard" for that year, as follows:—

Hon. E. H. Harris: . . . . . Before concluding I wish to quote a few further illuminating figures relating to the electoral rolls. I find that 25 rolls have 45,110 electors, and that the other 25 rolls have 165,839. And the Labour Party profess to stand for the principle of majority rule! Four seats represent 50,791 electors, or practically 25 per cent. of the total number on all the rolls. Four other seats represent 1,831 electors, not 1 per cent. of the total on the roll. One member represents 17,348 electors, and 13 Labour members represent 14,152.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: And one Labour member represents that number.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Five seats represent 61,414 electors, these seats being Canning, Leederville, Guildford, Claremont, and Subiaco. On the other hand, 29 seats represent 58,410 electors, or less than the other five. Mr. Collier, speaking in 1922, said the electoral position was a travesty. I ask hon. members what term would describe the present position of affairs.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: It is too hot for Mr. Brown. He has gone out.

Hon. E. H. Harris: It may be interesting to recall the recent contest in the Leederville electorate, when a lady candidate was fortunate enough to secure 711 first preference votes and yet unfortunate enough to lose her deposit. At Menzies, with 134 votes, and at Hannans, with 422 votes, the total of 566 votes, or less than the first preference votes secured by Mrs. Blake, sufficed to return two Government supporters. There is an instance of one person getting 711 votes and losing her deposit, while two members are elected by a total of 566. The total enrolments for the two electorates of Menies and Hannans aggregate 789 votes. The position may be summarised thus: 17 members hold 33 per cent. of the Assembly seats, while representing only 10 per cent. of the electors.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: That is democracy.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Democracy up to date.

Last year the hon. member was a preacher of democracy and championed the interests of the metropolitan area. Now he says the five seats of which the goldfields are to be deprived should be given, not to the metropolitan area, but to the country districts. This is another instance of what Mr. Harris was led into by his bump of benevolence. The desire to mutilate portions of his own province for the sake of the metropolitan area showed a spirit of self-sacrifice which we all admired. But Mr. Harris now tells us the proposal in this Bill to give five more seats to the metropolitan area in order to remove the political scandal of which he complained last year is robbery of the agricultural areas. The plea for the agricultural districts appears to be the result of a recent brain wave of Mr. Harris. The claims of the farmers seem to have entirely escaped the hon. gentleman's notice in the past and to have forced themselves on him only during the last few weeks. Mr. Harris quoted the Mitchell Bill from time to time in reverential tones as if it were Holy Writ. But we all know what was the outcome of that measure. We know that the Government who introduced it could not get the support of their majority to put it through, and that the whole proposal was sent back to the Commissioners for review. I am informed that the Commissioners were told to read up the debates in Parliament and be guided by them in coming to a fresh determination.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I hope they will not be told that this time.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Hamersley's views, as a representative of the farmers, would be entitled to some weight were it not for the flippant manner in which he dealt with the subject. I refer to his remarks about "aged people having a vote although they have got beyond the stage of producing wealth for the country"——

Hon. J. R. Brown: I missed that. I meant to rub it into him for it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: —and to his declaration that "the man in the city who is making agricultural implements should not be permitted to have a vote because the man in the country has to carry him on his back." I am sure Mr. Hamersley was not speaking seriously when he spoke in that strain. The man who takes up land has rights. He has also responsibilities to the State. All the great help that has been given by Governments to agriculture in Western Australia has not been rendered for the sole purpose of enabling a few thousand persons to gain an independence on the soil. The primary object was to encourage the production of

wealth so as to create employment, increase population, expand trade and commerce and build up the State. In return for the rights he enjoys, it is the duty of the owner of land to put it to the best possible use in the interests of the general community, and if he were to fail in that responsibility, Parliament would soon find it necessary to penalise him, by taxation or otherwise, to force him to bring his land into productivity. Fortunately there is very little necessity in Western Australia for such drastic action to be taken, and Parliament has already provided a remedy should such cases arise. While we all appreciate what the tillers of soil are doing towards the production of wealth, they are merely doing their duty to the community, just what the pastoralists did for half a century before them, what the timber getters have been doing since the foundation of the State, and what the gold miners did in large measure for over 25 years and are doing still in a lesser degree. A reference has been made by Mr. Cornell and others to the inclusion of Yilgarn in the mining instead of in the agricultural area. It would seem that the district is gradually developing into a wheat growing territory. But it was included in the mining area in the Act of 1922, and, if any error has been made in classing it as mining and pastoral now, thereby giving it a lower quota than it would otherwise have, the farming community should be only too pleased with what they should regard as a special concession in their favour. So far they have not complained of it, unless Mr. Cornell is speaking on behalf of the Yilgarn electors who are following agricultural occupations. I listened with great interest and pleasure to Sir William Lathlain's speech. It was broad-minded and generous, free from all party feeling, and did credit to the hon. member. Sir William Lathlain, in dealing with a most important measure, set an example to all of us how it is possible, in spite of the promptings of partisanship, to view great questions without prejudice and with justice to those who are opposed to us. Mr. Seddon wishes to know why the Federal rolls on which the recent elections were fought contain for Western Australia a total of 203,146 electors, while the State rolls made up about the same time show 214,689 electors, or 11,543 more. I referred the matter to the Chief Electoral Registrar, and he has written as follows:—

> I am unable to explain beyond question why the Federal enrolment is 11,543 below the State enrolment without an absolute comparison of the two sets of rolls and so ascertain particulars as to the whereabouts of the surplus electors.

Hon. E. H. Harris: The surplus is in the metropolitan area.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The report continues—

> It is generally admitted that much keener interest is taken in a State election than in a Federal election owing to the varying respective electoral strengths, viz., 40,000 for a Federal division and from 18,000 to 270 for a State electorate. The 1921 census figures disclose unmistakably the fact that 55 per cent. of the total population are eligible for enrolment. If this percentage be applied to the total population of our State as at 30th September last, viz., 400,000, it will be seen that there should be in the neighbourhood of 220,000 electors. This will give the ample margin of 5,457 above the State enrolment as at 24th October last, viz., 214,543, which margin may be allotted to foreigners, etc. It is common knowledge that thousands of claims were received too late for inclusion on the Federal election rolls which closed on 9th October last. In my own office alone over 300 Federal claims were lodged during 10th, 11th, 12th October, such an unusual occurrence being naturally fixed in my memory. As regards the State electoral rolls which elect 50 members, while the Commonwealth rolls elect eight only, I have no doubt that our numbers are more likely to be accurate. But without a very costly comparison and a verification in the nature of a small house-to-house canvass, it is impossible to say absolutely which figures are nearer the actual numbers.

Mr. Seddon says that under this measure there will be only eight seats for the whole of the present goldfields, while under the Bill introduced by the Mitchell Government provision was made for nine seats. I do not know where Mr. Seddon gets nine seats. There were four for the goldfields central and four for the mining area.

Hon. H. Seddon: I think there were five. The report will show it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have a copy of the Commission's report, which gave the proposed approximate enrolment as follows:—Boulder, 2,755; Brown Hill-Ivanhoe, 2,868; Hannans, 2,747; Kalgoorlie 2,814; Kanowna 1,638; Coolgardie 1,815; Murchison 2,202 and Mount Leonora 1,786. Consequently there were only eight.

Hon. H. Seddon: What about Yilgarn?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have given the whole of the seats for the central goldfields and the outer mining area. I also mentioned the matter to the Chief Electoral Officer, who was one of the Commissioners, and he said there were only eight. While Mr. Seddon was speaking on this point, my colleague, Mr. Kitson, asked the very pertinent question—"How many seats would you have got under the Mitchell scheme with the present enrolment?" Mr. Seddon then read figures which he said were illuminating, but which avoided the question. I have here a statement prepared by the Chief Electoral Registrar which indicates that if the 1922 Act were applied to the goldfields under the present enrolment, the goldfields central would consist of only 2.4 districts and the mining 3.1. They would therefore have only six members between them, as against the eight under this Bill. The Metropolitan area with 188,866 electors would be reduced to 54,433 and the quota would be 3,537, whilst the number of districts as the result of the enrolments would be 15.3. Agricultural, with 86,749, would remain at that and would have 24.5 districts. Goldfields Central, with 8,395, would remain at that and would have 2.4 districts. Under this Bill, with the application of the Mitchell scheme, mining would have 7,441, an increase of 11,161, and the number of districts 3.1. It is little use making a comparison between the number of members the goldfields would have under the Act of 1922 and the enrolment on which it was based. If Mr. Seddon applies that Act to present conditions he will find that under it the goldfields would have two members less than they have under this Bill. Even Mr. Stewart admits that they would have one less. Mr. Stewart denounces the Bill. He says it is iniquitous because it does not give sufficient representation to the farmer.

Hon. H. Stewart: But it does not take into account the increase of population.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: He commences his criticisms by stating that many of the electorates designated as agricultural areas are not such at all, but outports, forest and coal districts and country towns. Yet he does not hesitate to use the number of electors in these so-called bogus agricultural districts to support his claim for more representation for the farmers, and basing his criticisms on the figures, he becomes trenchant in his comments.

Hon. H. Stewart: I never mentioned farmers; I mentioned agricultural areas.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: He talks about "back-handed slaps" to the agriculturist and he declares that the "iniquitous Bill does not recognise in any shape or form the development that is being carried out by that section of the community and the increased population that has resulted from the development." All this sounds well and appears all right until a test is applied. As a matter of fact there is not a large number of farmers in Western Australia. I am informed by the Government Statistician that there are only 10,962 cereal growers in this State. Of these 9,269 are wheat-growers. I inquired as to the number of orchardists, and found out that last year there were approximately 1,400. So that we have less than 13,000 persons engaged in the cultivation of the land in Western Australia including even the man who has only a couple of acres of potatoes under crop. Many of these are married, and some have sons and daughters 21 years and over. But even making due allowance for them, it will be recognised that an immense proportion of the 86,749 electors for the agricultural areas are not farmers or farmers' wives or sons and daughters of adult age, and can no more claim to be producers of wheat or fruit than the man in the city, who is engaged in the manufacture of agricultural implements, or the man on the Fremantle wharf who is engaged in loading wheat on the wharves.

Hon. H. Stewart: But they are a long way from Perth.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Indeed it would be difficult to devise any scheme by which the farmers could get direct representation, and even then it could be only poor representation if their numbers were merely taken into account. Mr. Hall has shown since he has been in the House that he has a mind of his own, and that he is not afraid to express views which may not be popular in some quarters. Mr. Hall suggests that, instead of transferring the five goldfields seats to the metropolitan area, the number of members of the Legislative Assembly should be reduced by five in order to effect a saving to the taxpayer. The hon. member has not been long a member of this Chamber and is therefore unaware of the fact that the one great electoral grievance of this Chamber during the last four and a half years has been the inadequate representation of the metropolitan area in the Legislative

Assembly, and that such electorates as Leederville and Canning have been quoted as shocking examples. Mr. Hall's suggestion, while it would mean, if adopted, a direct gain of £3,000 a year to the Treasury, would not provide a remedy from a state of affairs which has aroused the indignation even of members like Mr. Harris who do not belong to the metropolitan area, but are swayed by a keen sense of justice.

Members: What?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It may be said that there are anomalies in this Bill. The same could be said of any similar Bill that might be prepared, no matter what pains were taken to make it an acceptable measure. Not in the history of the State has a Bill been drafted for the purpose of re-fixing electoral boundaries without causing dissatisfaction in some quarter or other. There are critics from various standpoints. Either one district has been treated too generously or another district has not been treated liberally enough, on the importance of some industry has not been sufficiently recognised, or too much power has been given to large masses of the people, and so on. It has always been so and always will be so to the end. But, on the whole, this Bill has met with a better general reception up to date than any other proposal connected with a redistribution of seats that I can call to mind.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Will you adopt the recommendations of the commissioners?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not think we shall follow any precedent established in the past.

Hon. A. Lovekin: That is satisfactory.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Bill has had a smooth passage so far, and those principally concerned have made no attempt to prevent its becoming law. I hope that no undue delay will take place in its passage through the Committee stage, and that it will be possible within the next week or so to place the Act in the hands of the Commission so that they may make a commencement with their important work.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: We could finish it to-day.

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

Ayes	20
Noes	5
Majority for	15

Ayes.	
Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. A. Lovekin
Hon. J. R. Brown	Hon. W. J. Mann
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. E. Rose
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. A. J. H. Saw
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon E. H. Harris	Hon. H. A. Stephenson
Hon. J. J. Holmes	Hon. Sir E. Wittenoom
Hon. W. H. Kitson	Hon. H. J. Yelland
Hon. Sir W. F. Lathlain	Hon. J. T. Franklin (*Teller.*)

Noes.	
Hon. W. T. Glasheen	Hon. H. Stewart
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. E. H. H. Hall (*Teller.*)
Hon. G. A. Kempton	

Pair.	
Aye.	No
Hon. C. B. Williams	Hon. C. H. Wittenoom

Question thus passed.

Bill *read a second time.*

BILL—WORKERS' HOMES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [5.15] in moving the second reading said: The Bill is necessary in order to give the Workers' Homes Board power to take advantage of the Commonwealth housing scheme, and also to amend the parent Act in certain directions considered by the board desirable in view of their experience since the Act came into operation. The Commonwealth housing scheme is designed to make available a large sum of money, 20 millions, for the purpose of erecting and purchasing workers' homes That is the principal feature of the Bill before the House. Clause 2 amends Section 3 of the principal Act, which defines a "worker." In the principal Act "worker" means every person, male or female, who is employed in work of any kind or in manual labour, and who at the time of his application is in receipt of not more than £400 per annum. The Bill inserts into that definition the following words, "subject to Part II. of new Section (44b)." Section 44, paragraph (b) is a new section designed to give the board authority to administer the provisions of the Commonwealth Housing Act. The new section is practically a copy of the Commonwealth Housing Act, which provides for assistance to be given up to a maximum of £1,800, which is to be granted to persons in receipt of an income of not more than £12 a week and who are not the

owners of other property. The advances under this Act can be made up to 90 per cent. of the valuation of the property in respect of which the loan is made. This section also provides for the discharging of mortgages, the purchasing of properties, and the enlargement of dwelling-houses. Clause 3 of the Bill amends Section 6 of the principal Act. Section 6, Subsection 2, provides that all moneys appropriated under this Act shall be placed to the credit of an account in the Treasury to be called the Workers' Homes Fund, and applied to the purposes of this Act. The amendment gives power to the Treasurer to invest any surplus funds of the board not immediately required in such securities as he may think fit and thus ensure the earning of interest while the surplus is not otherwise being used. Clause 4 amends Section 8 of the principal Act, which limits the amount advanced at present to £650. The Bill extends the amount to £800. This is required owing to the increased cost of building and the difficulty experienced in obtaining suitable dwellings without requiring applicants to pay large amounts in excess of the maximum advance of £650.

Hon. H. J. Yelland: What would be the immediate repayments on a loan of £800?

The HONORARY MINISTER: It is all according to a schedule of rates. I can supply the hon. member with that list if he desires it. The position at present is that this clause will increase the £650 to £800. Under the Commonwealth housing scheme the limit is £1,800. Clause 5 of the Bill amends Section 11 of the principal Act by increasing the term of repayment from 30 years to 35 years. This also is required in view of the increased advance to be made, in order that the monthly repayments shall not be too large for applicants to meet. As a rule the greatest difficulty that a worker has in purchasing a home is in meeting the weekly payments which, over a series of years, may be so large as to become very inconvenient to him. Clause 6 amends Section 14 of the Act, by which the lessee covenants to pay the annual rent by quarterly or half-yearly instalments, as prescribed. The words "quarterly or half-yearly" have been deleted in the amendment, thus making the annual rent payable as prescribed. In the past the procedure of the board has been to make the instalments to the board under this section payable fortnightly, those payments including interest, principal, insurance, ground rent, and water and municipal rates. In addition, the amendment inserts a paragraph giving the board power to enter upon premises and make all repairs that the board may deem necessary, and to charge the lessee with the cost of such repairs.

Hon. J. Cornell: That is absolutely necessary.

The HONORARY MINISTER: That is in cases where the lessee fails to maintain the house in good repair. At present there is no authority for the board to take such action and experience has demonstrated the necessity for giving the board this authority. Clause 7 amends Section 16 of the Act, which provides that when a lessee has paid the full amount of the capital cost of a dwelling house, with interest thereon, he shall be entitled to receive from the board a certificate of purchase of the dwelling house in the prescribed form. The amendment further provides that after the lessee receives the certificate of purchase, the lease shall be held subject only to the payment by the lessee of the ground rent and of rates, taxes and assessments, and no other condition shall apply to the lease; and the lessee will then be able to transfer his lease on the open market. At present a lessee under Section 19 of the principal Act, if he desires to dispose of his lease is bound to sell his interest to the board, and the board shall purchase at the value of the property at the date of such purchase. There are also further provisions at present for the appointment of arbitrators in the event of the lessee not being satisfied with the board's assessment of the value of his interest. The amendment will remove the necessity for the lessee taking this action after he has once paid the capital cost of the dwelling. It will make the position much easier and will simplify the method of disposing of his property. Clause 8 further amends Section 19 of the principal Act. Subsection 1 of Section 19 reads—

> No disposition of any worker's dwelling shall be made by the lessee or any person lawfully claiming under a deceased lessee except to the board.

The amendment limits this to a lessee who has not paid the total capital cost of the dwelling and received his certificate of purchase, and further gives the lessee the

power to dispose of his dwelling to another worker with the approval of the board. Whoever buys the property must be eligible to obtain a worker's home under the Act. A second amendment is also made to subsection 2 of Section 19, which states that if a lessee or any person lawfully claiming under a deceased lessee is desirous of selling his interest in the worker's dwelling, the board shall purchase it at its value at the date of such purchase. In the amendment the word "shall" has been altered to "may." The effect of this amendment is that a lessee who has not paid off the whole of the capital cost of the dwelling can transfer to another worker at an agreed price with the approval of the board. Also the board may purchase it at the board's valuation if the lessse desires, but the board is not bound to do so, as it was under the original Act. Therefore in the amending Bill the lessee has two means of disposing of his dwelling, whereas in the principal Act he had only the one avenue, namely the board.

Hon. E. H. Harris: How is the valuation arrived at?

The HONORARY MINISTER: The board put a value on the property and if it is not satisfactory to the lessee the Act provides for the calling in of arbitrators. Clause 9 of the Bill amends Section 20 of the Act.

Hon. J. Nicholson: The board were not compulsory purchasers.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Under the principal Act they were. There we had the word "shall."

Hon. J. Nicholson: But it was not always insisted upon.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I believe that at times the board have been able to carry out certain transactions without sticking to the letter of the Act.

Hon. E. H. Harris: In other words, they have evaded the Act.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Strictly speaking, perhaps they have. It will be in the interests of all parties to have this amendment. Clause 9 amends Section 20 of the Act, which provides that the board shall, as soon as possible, dispose of any interest acquired under the previous section in such a manner as to ensure the continuation of the land and buildings as a worker's dwelling. An addition to this has been made. It will have the effect that the value of any additions and improvements purchased by the board shall be added to the original capital cost. This procedure has been followed by the board in the past, but it is desired to incorporate it in the Bill. The experience of the board shows that this provision is necessary.

Hon. J. Cornell: Yes, much depends upon the way depreciation is met.

The HONORARY MINISTER: There is a difference in the way in which people look after their homes. Some maintain them in proper condition and create improvements. They should be entitled to the full value of those improvements when they dispose of their dwellings. There are others who are not particular enough even to maintain their homes in the condition in which they receive them. Clause 10 amends Section 24. This deals with advances for homes on the freehold basis, and provides for a maximum advance of £650. The amendment will allow of an advance of £800. It is very hard to build a reasonable dwelling for a lesser sum than £800 or £900. This amendment will give every worker the opportunity to secure a reasonably decent home of his own.

Hon. J. Cornell: This applies to freehold?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Clause 11 amends Section 29, which provides for the term of the lease to be 30 years in the case of stone and brick or stone or brick, 20 years in the case of concrete or reinforced concrete or other similar material, and 15 years in the case of wood and iron, or wood. The amendment provides for a 35 years' term for brick, concrete, etc., and 25 years for wood or wood and iron. A further amendment provides for the interest to be charged on loans at the prescribed rate instead of at 6 per cent. It is stated that the interest rate was previously amended to 7 per cent. less ½ per cent., under the power given by an amendment to the Act of 1922. It has not yet been definitely established what rate of interest will be charged in connection with the administration of the Commonwealth housing scheme, and it is considered necessary to provide in the amendment that the interest shall be "as prescribed." Clause 12 amends Section 30, which provides for interest to be at the rate of 6 per cent., reducible to 5½ per cent. by way of rebate for payment within seven days of the due date of the instalment. The remarks upon the previous section as to the rate of interest also apply in this case. It

is desired in the amendment to show a rebate of ½ per cent., so that it will apply equally, and no matter what rate of interest is prescribed to be charged no further amendment will be necessary. If there is any alteration in the rate of interest payable, the ½ per cent. rebate will apply no matter what the rate of interest is. Clause 13 amends Section 34. This gives the board power to call up a loan in cases where the borrower has not kept his promise under the Act and effected necessary repairs, and has failed to comply with the board's notice to effect necessary repairs. It also gives authority to the board to enter upon the premises and effect all repairs that are deemed necessary, and also charge the cost against the borrower's account with interest at the rate of 6 per cent. per annum. The amendment provides that the interest charges in this connection shall be at the prescribed rate, which is in accordance with a previous amendment dealing with interest chargeable. This is a fair provison. When a person occupies a home under this Act and does not keep it in proper repair, the board should have power, when their instructions are ignored, to carry out whatever maintenance is necessary and charge the owner with the amount involved. Clause 14 amends Section 36. This does not give the board power to take any action if the borrower leaves his property unoccupied. The amendment does give the board this power, and enables them to take similar action if the property is left unoccupied as can be taken when the instalments are not paid. It is realised that an unoccupied property rapidly deteriorates, and it is desired to have authority satisfactorily to control the position.

Hon. J. Cornell: These homes are not built to be left unoccupied.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Any unoccupied property deteriorates in value very quickly. Clause 15 amends Section 37, which sets out the position as to the transfer of the borrower's property. The amendment will give the borrower power to transfer his mortgage with the consent of the board to a worker as defined in the Act. Clause 16 is really the principal amendment to the Act. It inserts a new section, and is practically a copy of the Commonwealth Housing Act. It sets out the position, showing the alterations in the Act. It will be an authority for the board to carry out operations under the Act. The sections and the amendments are fully stated, as well as the conditions under which the Act will operate. The Commonwealth Housing Act of 1927 gives power to the Commonwealth Savings Bank to advance money for the purchase or erection of dwelling houses, or the discharge of mortgages on dwelling houses in accordance with and subject to the provisions of the Act. It provides for a maximum advance of £1,800 and in several ways goes further than the Workers' Homes Act. Another section in the Commonwealth Act provides that the money shall only be advanced to authorities. The interpretation of "authority" in Section 4 of the Commonwealth Act shows that it means a prescribed Commonwealth, territorial, State, or municipal authority, which administers a scheme for providing or assisting in providing dwelling houses. There are other sections of the Commonwealth Act which make it necessary for the State to amend its own Act in order to enable workers in receipt of an income of not more than £12 a week to come within the provisions of the Act. It also makes it mandatory upon the State so to amend the Workers' Homes Act to provide for the purchase in addition to the erection of houses.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The State is still limited to £800 for the purchase or mortgage of workers' homes.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The State is still limited to that sum. When advantage is taken of the Commonwealth Act, the maximum loan is £1,800. In Committee, I shall be in a position to go more into detail. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [5.40]: The Honorary Minister has given a fairly lucid explanation of the contents of this Bill. It is one that I commend to hon. members. It liberalises the State law. As the Honorary Minister has said, it also incorporates the Commonwealth Housing scheme. The only debatable question is that which deals with freehold versus leasehold. Down the ages much has been said concerning that controversial point. Mr. Panton and I, and Mr. Foley and Mr. Hickey were the only Parliamentarians, I think, who availed themselves of leasehold homes.

Hon. J. Nicholson: What do you believe in now?

Hon. J. CORNELL: I think the leasehold is as good as the freehold. For many years the fly in the ointment was that even when the lessee had paid off the whole cost of his leasehold home he had not a negotiable article. I know of only one case where a lessee who had paid off the capital cost of his home, and secured his certificate of purchase, had the right to sell to someone other than the board at the value that person was prepared to pay. The board have always fought strongly against that view. Eminent counsel, as well as the Crown Law Department, were opposed to the view of the board. They held that under the parent Act, once the lessee had discharged his liability to the board, and received his certificate of purchase, he was bound first to offer his property to the board, but the board was also bound to pay the price someone else was prepared to give. How many lessees know of that case? I think it is now the intention of the Government to make the leasehold worker's dwelling a negotiable article, and when he has paid off the capital cost, with interest, and received his certificate of purchase, he may dispose of that dwelling; but the land will be held as a leasehold in perpetuity. He has a negotiable article, an article as good as freehold if assessed from the practical and not the sentimental side. I myself have a leasehold worker's dwelling. The value of the land unimproved is, say, £100 for 20 years. I pay £3 annually in perpetuity as ground rent on the £100. Any person to-day can invest £100 at 6 per cent. per annum in good, sound security. That is £6 as against £3, but one cannot get people to see the point as regards leasehold. They overlook the amount of money required to purchase freehold, on which amount they lose interest all the time. Suppose a lessee under the existing Act gets his certificate of purchase and has a house which cost, apart from the land, £600. According to the Bill and according to the Honorary Minister, he can sell the dwelling to whom he pleases.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Read Clause 15 of the Bill.

Hon. J. CORNELL: That deals with freehold; I am only dealing with leasehold. A dwelling house which in 1914 or 1915 cost £600 is now worth £1,000. The only further point that enters into the question is whether any person not a worker can hold a leasehold home. In that respect the law requires to be construed. These homes were never built for the purpose of sale from year to year, or for the purpose of allowing land-hunting gentry to acquire a number of them as landlords. Under the proposed amendment, if a worker's dwelling is sold after the issue of the certificate of purchase, must the purchaser be a worker within the meaning of the Act? I would like the Honorary Minister to clear up that point.

Hon. J. Nicholson: "Or to another worker with the approval of the board."

Hon. J. CORNELL: The Workers' Homes Act is divided into two parts—leasehold and freehold. The Honorary Minister's proposal refers to freehold. In connection with freehold the board do not advance the full amount, but only 75 per cent. of it. During the currency of the mortgage the board to-day have no power to refuse a transfer to a person other than a worker. They desire that pending the full liquidation of the mortgage the only person to whom the dwelling may be sold shall be a worker. The point I previously dealt with has nothing to do with the leasehold system. It is a matter for the Honorary Minister to inquire into. The draftsman of the Bill or the board itself has not sought to circumscribe the amendment by eliminating too much. To my mind, the amendment regarding freehold means that during the currency of a mortgage the only person to whom a transfer can be made is a worker, but that after the liquidation of the mortgage the property may be sold to anyone. If that is a fair principle to apply to the silvertail section, the freehold section, it is a fair principle to apply to the people foolish enough to take leasehold homes. Both classes must discharge their liability to the State, and that is all the State requires. The Honorary Minister says the Bill makes a disposition of the dwelling much easier and clears up much obscurity in regard to the position in which the lessee of a worker's dwelling stands prior to proceedings for sale and purchase. The lessee had absolutely no option but to go to the board and say, "I have to surrender this dwelling." He could not force the board to buy it. He simply had to surrender the dwelling to the board. From experience I have had in dealing with lessees of workers' homes, I know that hardship has resulted. The board were

bound to the £650, and could not go beyond that amount. If a man put in £100 worth of permanent improvements beyond the capital cost, the board were still bound by the amount stated in the Act. The board have even gone outside the law in their desire to be fair and reasonable. To-day a lessee who has not paid off the liability on his home may go to the board and say, "I can dispose of my interest to another worker on conditions satisfactory to myself and, I believe, satisfactory to your security." That is the position intended by the Bill. It is essential to refer to two or three other matters. There is the question of the board having the right to enter a worker's dwelling, whether freehold or leasehold, and carry out renovations. That is absolutely essential. I know of two tenants who had to be turned out of their homes because they were foolish enough to ignore the board's directions as to renovations. They saw their error afterwards. The board's security was depreciating, and the board could do nothing but force the tenant out of the dwelling. I know that such action was taken much against the liking of the board. The power in question refers only to what every decent tenant does, namely renovate periodically. If the tenant does not do it——

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The landlord does it.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Yes. The position may be that Brown paints his house every two or three years, while Jones does not. Under the existing law all the board could do was to push Jones out. Under the Bill they will be able to paint the house and charge the cost to Jones. It is true that Jones covenants to do that, but there is nothing to enforce the covenant. The Bill is one that can be passed with advantage to all concerned. I hope the real issue will not be obscured by a belated attempt to force freehold on the present Government. I am satisfied that as time goes on, unless another big attempt is made to popularise the leasehold system, the inevitable result must be freehold all round. Since 1916 not half a dozen houses have been built in the city on the leasehold principle. Either the leasehold principle must be persevered with, or present leaseholders must eventually become freeholders. Now I wish to turn to the Commonwealth housing scheme, a scheme I think we can very well do without, a scheme which one would expect from Mr. Scullin, and not from Mr. Bruce. That scheme provides for people who can build homes for themselves and who ought to do so. The result of the elaborate Commonwealth scheme will be to place an undue tax upon a fine section of the community who do things for themselves and strive to bring up their families, people placed perhaps a little more highly than I am, people in receipt of a fairly good income who should be left to their own initiative to provide for their own homes. The inevitable conclusion to be drawn from the Commonwealth scheme is that that class will pay because they have to shoulder the taxation involved. The Minister pointed out that the maximum amount under the Commonwealth scheme was £1,800, and that a worker under that scheme was a person in receipt of upwards of £600. When I cast my memory back to the fight the diggers had in connection with the War Service Homes Act, with the object of securing the erection of decent houses and not dog kennels, I remember that the limit under that Act was fixed at £850, and that applied from the general right up to the "glorious digger." There was no differentiation. At the same time when we come to consider the application of the Commonwealth housing scheme to civilians, we see that there is a difference, and the maximum amount that is available is £1,800.

The Honorary Minister: I do not think that will be taken advantage of.

Hon. J. CORNELL: But it is there. I think the Commonwealth scheme is too elaborate. It caters for every section, including the section who could well be left to cater for themselves. It will impose a burden upon a section of the community already carrying the biggest proportion of the financial responsibility in the Commonwealth. There is another point I wish to refer to. Our own Workers' Homes Act is administered by the Workers' Homes Board. The earnings of a man within the meaning of a "worker" under our Act are limited to £400, and the total amount that can be secured for a home is £800. Then we have the war service homes, eligibility for participation in which is active service, and under that scheme the limit is £850. We can let that scheme go by the board. Then there is the Commonwealth housing scheme, which is administered by the Workers' Homes Board, with a maximum loan available of £1,800 to workers who are in receipt of upwards of £600 a year. I would like the Minister to tell the House whether the Workers' Homes Board will utilise the board's own funds for providing homes for workers within the

meaning of our State Act, and money available under the Commonwealth Housing Scheme will be utilised to accommodate workers who do not come within the scope of the State Workers' Homes Act. Will it be problematical, or will there be open play? Now that we have the Commonwealth Housing Scheme, I hope much of the money will be expended by the Workers' Homes Board from the Commonwealth funds, because that has to apply to freeholds. If that money can be made use of in building freehold homes, the State funds will be available for the popularising of our leasehold system. If the two schemes are to be continued, our own funds should be utilised in connection with leaseholds. I wish to pay a tribute to the members of the Workers' Homes Board. The board has functioned since 1912 and has had two chairmen only since its inauguration. These were the late Mr. Harry Johnston and Mr. Hardwick, the present chairman. The board has had but one secretary from the inception. I am merely repeating what I have said on numerous occasions before, that the model board of this State is the Workers' Homes Board.

The Honorary Minister: They have not had one loss.

Hon. J. CORNELL: In addition to which they have shown a profit on administration, which is a monument to the board, particularly as the three members have acted in an honorary capacity. We can at any rate give those members the measure of praise that is due to them. In addition to the ordinary work of the Workers' Homes Board, the members of that body administer the affairs of the war service homes. I well remember that in 1919 I failed to secure a seconder at the R.S.L. conference for my proposal that the Workers' Homes Board should take over the administration of the war service homes. My voice was as one crying in the wilderness. However, we remember that a War Service Homes Board elsewhere got into one of the most glorious administrative tangles imaginable. Later on the very body, in respect of which I failed to get a seconder at the conference, was asked to take over the administration of the war service homes in this State. With the exception of a few minor instances, the administration of the board has given every satisfaction, and, generally speaking, the digger has as much confidence in the administration by the board of war service homes matters, as the lessees under the Workers' Homes Act have of the board's administration of that Act. I hope I have not unduly wearied the House but I could not conclude without paying that tribute of praise to the members of the Workers' Homes Board.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—LICENSING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [6.10] in moving the second reading said: Under Part V. of the Licensing Act, provision was made for the appointment of a Licenses Reduction Board whose operations were restricted to six years. The end of the term will be reached on the 31st of this month, but it is the desire of the Government to extend the period for another two years. To date the board has a good record for work well done. It has closed 110 licensed premises, which were found, after thorough investigation, no longer necessary to meet the needs of the people. In 1924 the number closed was 51; in 1925, 22; 1926, 7; 1927, 19; and this year, 11. The total amount of compensation paid was £83,809. This money came out of a compensation fund established under the Act of 1922, by which licensees were required to contribute towards the financing of the fund, 2 per cent. of the amount expended by them in the purchase of liquor. By this means £114,479 has been raised and, as I have already stated, £83,809 has been expended in compensation. Under the Act two-thirds of the costs of the board are paid from the compensation fund and the rest has to be met by the Government. At the present time there is a balance of £13,541 in the fund, and for that reason it has been decided to prolong the life of the board in order that it may continue its work and utilise this money for the delicensing of any hotels which it may find necessary to close.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Is there not £7,000 more to go into the fund as well?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am not aware of that. It is not considered that there is very much work left for it to do, but cases demanding attention may occa-

sionally arise. It is thought, however, that at the end of the two years there should be no necessity for the further closing of hotels or for a continuance of the operation of Part V. of the Act. Now, in addition to the 2 per cent. contribution to the compensation fund, licensees have been paying to the Treasury 5 per cent. on the amount of their liquor purchases, less Customs and Excise duty and also less their license fees In other words, the amount of the licensee fee paid by each licensee is deducted from his 5 per cent. contribution. So that he does not pay the 5 per cent. in addition to his license fee. Under this Bill it is proposed to increase the 5 per cent. contribution to 6 per cent. Revenue will get the benefit of the increase. It will mean, however, that in the future the licensees will pay a total of 6 per cent. instead of 5 per cent. plus 2 per cent. as formerly, and while the Treasury will benefit to the exent of 1 per cent., it will be called upon to assist in financing the board and, perhaps towards the end, will have to find the whole of the expenditure. There is no doubt that when the £13,000 is gone the Government will have to foot the whole bill.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Sir Edward Wittenoom asked for come information as to the cost of the administration of the board. I am in a position to supply the figures which are as follows:—

Year.	From Compensation Fund.	From Treasury.	Total.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
1923-24 ...	2,611 4 0	1,305 12 0	3,916 16 0
1924-25 ...	2,663 5 5	1,331 12 8	3,994 18 1
1925-26 ...	3,061 3 11	1,530 12 0	4,591 15 11
1926-27 ...	3,460 15 5	1,730 7 9	5,191 3 2
1927-28 ...	3,162 3 4	1,581 1 8	4,743 5 0
1928-29 (portion)	1,061 18 3	530 19 2	1,592 17 5

Under the Act two-thirds of the cost has to come from the compensation fund and the Treasury has to find one-third. In the future the work of the board will largely be confined to the licensing side. This work is much more extensive than it used to be when the old-time Licensing Bench, consisting of a police or resident magistrate and two justices, was in operation. Then the bench met in court from time to time, mostly once a year, and heard applications. Now the board will be constantly travelling through the country, seeing the hotels are properly conducted insofar as the comfort and convenience of the public are concerned. They have been doing that since they were appointed, and the result is that the general standard of our hotels—especially in regard to accommodation—has vastly improved since the administration was entrusted to the board. To put the whole position briefly: The Bill continues the operation of the delicensing provisions of the Licensing Act for another two years; it abolishes the 2 per cent. contribution by the licensees to the compensation fund; but it increases the amount of contribution in the way of license fees to be paid by the licensees from 5 per cent. to 6 per cent. in view of the fact that in the future larger financial rsponsibility will devolve on the Government than has hitherto been the case. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. E. H. Harris, debate adjourned.

BILL—WATER BOARDS ACT AMENDMENT.

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly notifying that it had agreed to amendment No. 3 made by the Council but had disagreed to amendments Nos. 1 and 2, further considered.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 29th November. Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair: the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Clause 2.—Delete the first three lines and insert in lieu thereof the following: —"In every case where the Public Works Department has expended or may hereafter expend money in providing a water supply of sufficient capacity to supply the reasonable requirements of the ratepayers within the area to be rated in agricultural areas."

[The Chief Secretary had moved, "That the amendment be not insisted on."]

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I ask members to insist on the amendment to ensure to any community who will be rated that a sufficient supply of water is provided. Many settlers

would probably find they would have to wait for hours in order to get a supply. Proper provision has not been made to guarantee settlers an adequate supply.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Government cannot accept the amendment. Previously Mr. Hamersley moved an amendment as follows:—"In every case where the Public Works Department has expended or may hereafter expend money in providing a water supply in agricultural areas." If he again moves that amendment, omitting all reference to a sufficient supply, the Government will accept it. Under the amendment no Government would undertake the construction of a water supply.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: This is a very difficult problem. I have urged the Minister to define water areas so that we may know what we are doing. If we give the Government power to instal water supplies in agricultural areas, without having a definition of agricultural area, we do not know where it will lead. A few mornings ago I read that a ship at Fremantle had landed 300 tons of pipes for specific areas—Muckinbudin, Welbungin, Bencubbin, Mandiga, Kununoppin, and Nungarin. If the Government wish to provide water supplies and rate the areas, let them define the areas and this House will give them all the power they want. To ask for a general power to rate anybody in any part that might be called an agricultural area for work that may have been done or may hereafter be done is too much. There may be a limited water supply and an unlimited number of applicants for water, and probably the man who paid the highest amount of rates would find that someone living nearer to the standpipe had taken all the water before he arrived. I admit the position is surrounded with difficulties. For the time being, however, we should define the area and the Government having satisfied themselves that there is sufficient water in that area, the settlers can wait for it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It would be an easy matter to define present areas, but what about future areas? Every week the Minister for Agricultural Water Supplies receives requests for water supplies in different parts of the State. He might define existing water supplies, but nothing could be done until the meeting of Parliament next year. Is the business of the agricultural community to be hung up for six months to await the submission of a Bill to Parliament to give power to extend water supplies to various areas? The Government are not anxious to go on with the construction of these water supplies for which they have had to find large sums of money. All the same, farmers are in need of water, and the Government are trying to meet the situation and, at the same time, protect the revenue.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Because it suits his purpose, the Minister says that the Government cannot do this without the consent of Parliament. What authority did the Government have to order the pipes to which I referred just now? Did they ask for Parliamentary authority? Water supplies were required, and the Government ordered the pipes. If, during the next six months, the Government find that there is need for providing water supplies to other areas, they can again order more pipes and come along next session and seek authority. I hope on that occasion the names of the districts will be simpler than those that I read out.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I cannot see how we can adopt the suggestion of the Chief Secretary or that of Mr. Holmes. The Assembly has disagreed with our amendment, and we have no power to make another amendment. We must insist upon our amendments and ultimately get a conference.

The CHAIRMAN: I suggest to the Chief Secretary that he withdraw his motion that the amendment be not insisted upon, and under Standing Order 225 submit an alternative amendment as follows:—"In every case where the Public Works Department has expended or may hereafter expend money in providing water supplies in agricultural areas."

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I will adopt the suggestion and ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Under Standing Order 225, I move—

That the following alternative amendment be submitted to the Legislative Assembly:—"In every case where the Public Works Department has expended, or may hereafter expend money in providing water supplies in agricultural areas."

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I am afraid if we adopt the alternative amendment we shall

not have the opportunity suggested by Mr. Holmes to define an area, unless the Chief Secretary is prepared to put up another amendment. If we have a conference we can submit both amendments and then get the Bill into the shape we desire.

The CHAIRMAN: The Chief Secretary's alternative amendment can be sent to the Assembly and if it is not acceptable to that House, the Chief Secretary will then have to move that the amendment be not insisted on, or adopt the alternative of letting the matter go to a conference. There is still another alternative, and it is that progress might be reported at this stage, and in the meantime it can be ascertained whether the alternative amendment is acceptable.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: We have had experience of drafting amendments on the floor of the House, and we know that they are never satisfactory. If we insist on the amendment as it stands, we can have a friendly conference and the amendment, together with that suggested by Mr. Holmes, can be put in order. The Chief Secretary might report progress, and another amendment might be framed to meet the position suggested by Mr. Holmes.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I trust the Committee will arrive at finality and not rely upon a conference. We know that at the conference one manager can upset the whole proceedings by his persistent objections.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Why not report progress at this stage?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have been repeatedly reporting progress, and no progress has been made. We are now just where we were three or four weeks ago.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Report progress until to-morrow and see what can be done.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am prepared to do that.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: May I ask whether there was not a limitation of five miles applied to paragraph (a)?

The CHAIRMAN: There is no amendment at all.

Hon. H. STEWART: The amendment proposed by the Chief Secretary so altered the position as to leave the matter entirely open, and that required to be realised before the Committee accepted the Minister's amendment. When the Chief Secretary proposed this amendment, he said he was afraid the Bill would be lost, and remarked that really the Government were not very much concerned about it. But certain works have been carried out and the Government require revenue from those works. The Committee desire to help the Government to get that revenue, and to get revenue in all future instances. Then if at any time a schedule of works were put before the House there would be no difficulty in getting that schedule adopted. But it is necessary that any amendment should go further than that moved by the Chief Secretary.

Progress reported.

BILL—STAMP ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [8.5] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is introduced for the purpose of continuing the increased duty on transfers of property. Under the Bill the duty is £1 per £100. In Victoria and South Australia it is the same, but in New South Wales it is 15s. In England it is £1 per £100, having been doubled since 1910, except where the consideration does not exceed £500, when it is 10s. The revenue would be seriously affected—but to what extent is not ascertainable—if the duty were reduced to the old level. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [8.6]: A similar measure has been introduced each year ever since 1917. There has always been a sort of lurking hope on the part of the general public that each year would be the last in which the Bill would be introduced. It is a strange thing that once we provide an additional means of revenue the Government of the day, no matter which Government, are always anxious to retain the imposition and loth to eliminate it. About this time last year the Chief Secretary introduced a similar measure in almost the same words as he has used to-night.

Hon. E. H. Gray: It is a hardy annual.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: It is a very hardy annual. I besought the Minister on that occasion that he and his Government should set a worthy example to his predecessors and show them that something worth while could be done.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: You mean their successors, not their predecessors.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Well, their successors too. I had hoped the Bill would not be renewed this year. Last year I expressed the hope that it would not find a place on the statute book any longer. If it should be again continued, I will most impressively ask the Government not to re-introduce it any more, and not seek to impose a higher duty than actually exists. The position is simply this: The stamp duty on conveyances, fixed by the original Act, was 10s. per cent. During the emergency stage of the war period the Government doubled that duty. But when that measure was introduced it was clearly stated that it would be only temporary. Instead of that, the measure to-day is now a very permanent one. It comes down year in and year out with a most surprising consistency. It will be conceded that the duty of 10s. per cent. is a fair charge on those transactions. It is a good thing that we as a State should set an example to other States. The other States imposed similar measures, and I suppose that once they received the additional revenue from this source they have found it difficult to give up that method of raising revenue. I do not know whether the House desires to continue this impost for another year, but I really do not think it should be introduced again.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central—in reply) [8.10]: I carefully noted Mr. Nicholson's remarks last year and forwarded them to the Treasury. About a month ago, anticipating that this hardy annual was about to come up here again, I saw Mr. Berkeley, the Assistant Under Treasurer. One of the big points made by Mr. Nicholson last year was what he called the excessive duty on the transfer of shares. I myself have had some experience of that, and I am able to confirm everything Mr. Nicholson has said. I referred it to Mr. Berkeley, who said it had been noted and that there were in the Act other anomalies requiring correction. At that time he was doubtful whether the Bill would be re-introduced this year. He recognised the necessity for an amendment, especially in respect of the duty on the transfer of shares. So the hon. member will see that I have given attention to the matter. I sent along the "Hansard" report of his speech last year to the Treasury, where his remarks have been carefully noted. However, it has been considered necessary to bring down the Bill again this year.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

House adjourned at 8.14 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 4th December, 1928.

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

QUESTION—ELECTORAL, WEST PROVINCE.

Mr. SLEEMAN asked the Minister for Justice: 1, Is he aware that at the last West Province election a number of persons recorded postal votes who were neither sick nor outside the distance allowed under the Act from a polling booth? 2, If so, will the Electoral Department take proceedings against those persons 3, If not, why not?