

# Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 17th October, 1933.

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

## QUESTION—STATE SHIPPING SERVICE.

### *Cost of Wireless Service.*

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Mines: 1, Do the State Shipping Service pay for the wireless messages received by the m.v. "Koolinda" which are posted daily for the information of the passengers? 2, If so, what is the annual cost?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, Yes. 2, £40.

## QUESTION—RABBIT-PROOF NETTING.

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister for Lands: In view of the fact that 1½-inch mesh wire netting is not rabbit-proof, and in order to save farmers from the expense of erecting a fence that will not prove satisfactory, will the Government confine tenderers for the supply of rabbit-proof netting to 1½-inch mesh?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: One and a half inch mesh wire netting is the type largely adopted throughout Australia. It is admitted that a smaller mesh would probably be more effective, but the additional cost to settlers would be 21½ per cent. This increased expenditure would not be justified.

## QUESTION—EGGS FOR EXPORT.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, What variation of weights in connection with export eggs is permitted under the Federal regulations. 2, Are eggs as at present shipped overseas strictly graded in accordance therewith? 3, Who is responsible for the inspection and approval of eggs for export? 4, Is it permissible for eggs

of varying weights to be exported in one pack? 5, In view of the special consideration whereby all Western Australian eggs are marked with a Western Australian brand, can assurance be given that the requirements are being faithfully observed?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, ½oz. in 15 lb. pack, and ¼oz. in all other packs. 2, Yes. 3, The Department of Agriculture, acting for the Federal Department of Commerce. 4, Yes, in accordance with the variation permitted. 5, Every care is taken to ensure this.

## QUESTION—FRUIT DISEASES ACT, PROSECUTIONS.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Agriculture: How many prosecutions have taken place in the period from 1st July, 1931, to 1st July, 1933, for (a) failure to observe the requirements of the Fruit Diseases Act in connection with orchard practice for the control of fruit fly; (b) failure to observe the provisions of the Plant Diseases Act in the transmission of fruit from infected to clean areas?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: As prosecutions are not specially recorded, the information asked for could only be supplied by searching, which would take a great deal of time.

## BILL—LAND.

### *In Committee.*

Resumed from the 10th October; Mr. Sleeman in the Chair, the Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill.

Clause 101—Adjustment and appraisal of rents of pastoral leases granted before the commencement of this Act:

Mr. RODOREDA: I move an amendment—

That in Subclause (1), line 14, the words "one shilling" be struck out, and "fifteen pence" inserted in lieu.

The clause deals with the method of assessing rents of pastoral properties according to the value of wool produced from them; and that is an equitable method, for which the framers of the clause are to be commended. The clause provides for reduction of rent by 6 per cent. for each penny by which the average price of greasy wool may

have fallen below 1s. During the years 1918 to 1920 the average price of wool was 1s. 5d. per lb., and the appraisers took that circumstance into consideration, as well as the nearness of land to port, and other factors such as productivity of land. The basis of 1s. 3d., suggested by the amendment, would be a good basis on which to assess increased or decreased rent. For the 13 years ended on the 30th June last the price of wool averaged 14.2d. Had the suggested provision been in operation during the whole of that period, the Government would have gained an increase of 12 per cent. in rents over the period. However, it included the abnormal years 1923-24, when the price of wool was 22.3d., and 1924-25, when the price was 23.2d. Omitting those two years, the average for the period works out at 12.7d. On the other hand, the average for the last four years, including the last financial year, was only 8.5d. Thus pastoralists would have secured a concession in rent only during the last 18 months. I see no reason why the average of the 11 years should not be maintained when dealing with a percentage of increase or decrease. I desire also to move an amendment reducing the percentage from 6 per cent. to 4, so as to give the pastoralists a longer range.

The CHAIRMAN: That matter will have to be dealt with in a separate amendment.

Mr. RODOREDA: Yes, Mr. Chairman: but the two amendments are closely related.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I regret that I cannot possibly accept the amendment, as it would mean a loss of £20,000 in revenue from rents, and that is something which the Treasury cannot stand in these days. Moreover, the rents of pastoral leases are exceptionally reasonable. When the amendment Act of 1917 was passed, pastoral lessees were granted an extension of 20 years, and agreed to pay rental at about four times the assessed rental value of their lands to-day. Wool was not then at the price it reached during the boom time. During the last few years, by amendment Acts and reappraisements, rents have been reduced considerably. I have obtained from the Surveyor General a statement of average pastoral rentals, and they are as follows:—

Kimberley—5s. per 1,000 acres.  
 North-West—10s. per 1,000 acres.  
 Eastern Districts—3s. 6d. to 4s. per 1,000 acres.  
 Eucla—3s. per 1,000 acres.

So far as I know, the pastoralists are quite satisfied and have not asked for this amendment. When the measure was being drafted, the pastoralists offered various suggestions but not the suggestion embodied in this amendment. In view of concessions granted to the pastoralists during the last few years, the amendment should not be carried.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I cannot agree with the mover of the amendment that the basic price of wool should be raised to 1s. 3d. as against the 1s. provided in the clause, but I think the hon. member might be justified in raising the percentage increase operating over the 1s. It is more desirable to have a reasonable rental fixed and then, in the event of wool not realising a price that would enable the lessee to pay that rent, allow him a reduction accordingly; but I do not think it right to call upon him to pay an increased rental when the price of wool rises. I do not agree that the State should take advantage of an increase in the price of wool. The rent to-day is fixed on a reasonable price for wool, and we say that if the wool price falls below a reasonable point, the rent shall be reduced. In my view we should stop at that: for it must be remembered that while the price was down, the pastoralist suffered in other regards besides having to meet his rent. So I say he should be allowed to recoup his losses when better prices come.

Mr. LATHAM: The proposed amendment deals with the Act that was passed last year, when we considered that the payable basis of wool production was 1s. per pound. However, the price of wool went down and, to give consideration to the pastoralist, the rent was reduced on a basis of 6 per cent. for every penny below 1s. which the price of wool fell. Therefore, when the price of wool rises above the cost of production, the rent should be increased by 6 per cent. It is bordering on sharp practice to seek relief when the price of wool is down, and make no return when it rises again. I have heard no complaint whatever about the system, and so I do not propose to deprive the Government of revenue.

Mr. RODOREDA: The Minister says this amendment will cost the Government £20,000. I cannot follow his reasoning. Certainly it would not affect the revenue this year, for the basis of wool prices has been fixed. Admittedly it would affect the revenue next year, but it is impossible to say to

what extent until we learn the average price of wool.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The Minister astonished me by revealing the low price per thousand acres charged to some pastoralists. In the South-West we have had a very lean time, notwithstanding which we have been called upon to pay £1 per thousand acres. Yet, in comparison, we have nothing like the pastures enjoyed farther North.

Mr. Coverley: That is not a reasonable argument.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: It is, because we have no chance of getting the increase that other pastoralists will enjoy, and it is only right that when the price of wool is above 1s. a pound, those pastoralists in the North should pay additional rental. Since the Minister has said the amendment will cost the Government £20,000, I think it ought not to be agreed to.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 102—Improvement conditions:

Mr. WISE: I move an amendment—

Insert after "lease," in line 4: "Provided that any pastoral lease or part of a pastoral lease shall be liable to forfeiture, if such lease or portion thereof in excess of 20,000 acres in one conjoined area has not improvements effected and maintained thereon to the extent required by this section and section one hundred and forty of this Act."

The very moderate improvements required by the Act are, in my view, at an irreducible minimum. The maximum amount is £10 per thousand acres, which is a mere necessity if the land is to be rendered fit for occupation. In our cattle country we have examples of very large leases, some of them a million acres in extent, and under the Act it is quite possible to improve only one-tenth of a lease with all the improvements prescribed by the Act. The rest of the country may not be effectively occupied, or indeed occupied by cattle at all, but that is permitted, under the Act, on the basis of £10 per thousand acres. As a result, in leases of that magnitude, particularly where they front on a natural watercourse and have other natural advantages, where improvements are more easily effected than they are in country where there are no natural resources, we find that those areas have all the improvements required by the Act. In consequence, the whole of the stock

that a million-acre block will carry are at some periods confined to the improved parts of the run. Although the provision has stood in the Act for a long time, it is quite inadequate to the effective pastoral occupation of many of our empty spaces. Let me draw attention to what happens in respect of every other lease, no matter how small and insignificant, dealt with in the Act. In any other lease, pastoral or agricultural, it is necessary on a 20-acre or 50-acre block to effect certain improvements; else those blocks are liable to forfeiture. If it be just to a small grower that his block be subject to forfeiture for non-compliance with the improved conditions, it is equally just to the larger grower. I am not averse to large holdings; I have no objection to million-acre leases, provided the owner of the lease develops it to its capacity and effects improvements on it so as to occupy it to the best advantage.

Mr. Stubbs: He may not have the capital to do that.

Mr. WISE: Then he should not hold the area.

Mr. Stubbs: If he strikes a few droughts, how does he get on?

Mr. WISE: If the land is not improved when he strikes a drought, his holding is of no use to him. In the Kimberleys, where nature has provided water, one can find many areas that are overstocked and, if possible, over-improved. The inclusion of the proviso would inflict no hardship on anyone, but it must have a beneficial effect. As the minimum and in some instances the maximum areas to be held in certain parts of the State is not in excess of 20,000 acres, I have made that the basis of the area in my amendment, provided it is a conjoint area, on which improvements must be effected. If we succeed in getting pastoral leases improved on a pro rata basis, undoubtedly progress will follow, and instead of empty spaces remaining without people and without stock, we shall have more people and more and better stock. Where it is not possible to populate our empty acres more closely than pastoral pursuits permit, we should adopt every reasonable line of progress to permit of the feeding of people instead of wallabies.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: I know that this clause gives rise to controversy, particularly from members representing North-West constituencies. I am not

acquainted with the Kimberleys or the conditions obtaining there. The amendment means that it will be necessary for a lessee to divide his pastoral lease into areas of 20,000 acres, because every area in excess of that must be stocked and improved simultaneously and separately. To do that would be impossible. It might be possible in the Kimberleys, but it is not possible in the greater part of the State to which the Act will apply. The idea of the amendment is to prevent lessees holding larger areas than they can fully work, and also to prevent the understocking of one portion and the overstocking of another portion of a lease. I do not consider the amendment workable. The proviso may be inserted in the Act, but it certainly cannot be administered. The hon. member mentioned that a person taking up a homestead or conditional purchase area was required to make certain improvements.

Mr. Wise: I quite agree with it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But such land is situated in agricultural areas.

Mr. Patrick: Even then the holder can put all his improvements on one block.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. The department has to police that requirement in agricultural areas. We have very few inspectors. The land inspectors are the Agricultural Bank inspectors, and it is possible that, with respect to the conditions applying to agricultural areas, we cannot insist upon fulfilment. In the North-West I cannot see how we could possibly administer the provision. I have been told that pastoral lessees in the Kimberleys are making more improvements on their areas and are finding water.

Mr. Coverley: You should appoint an inspector to find out.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We cannot afford to appoint any more inspectors, and we have never claimed that sufficient inspectors were provided. It would be quite impossible to administer the Act if pastoralists were compelled to effect full improvements on every 20,000 acres.

Mr. Wise: Ten pounds worth per 1,000 acres would not be very much.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The amendment would only embarrass the pastoralists. I appreciate the reason for the amendment, but there are many objections to it. While I would like to see the land in

the Kimberleys used to a greater extent, the amendment might do more harm than good.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The member for Gascoyne deserves commendation for dealing with the position of the North he knows so well, and submitting a method by which the existing evils of land monopoly might be overcome for the benefit of that part of the State and of the pastoralists themselves. The outstanding need of the North is population, and it has been emphasised for some years that the white population is decreasing. The decrease is encouraging chartered companies and land monopolists to cast their eyes on areas there because they seem to think we do not value the land. Because of the low improvement conditions, we do not value the asset to the extent it deserves. Companies are encouraged to come here because we are doing so little. The pastoralist is not utilising the land but is monopolising it. I do not know the North-West very well, but I have worked on stations. Some stations have water frontages, and while they have carried out improvements along the water front, they also monopolise large holdings not improved to the extent we should demand. It is because of the limited amount of improvement that the population is so small. There is no room for population when land is monopolised and unused. At periods the back country is used, but in some years it is never used. The position could be improved, and if the present lessees cannot afford to do better, and if they have enough land to gratify their needs and ambitions without using the back country, it should be made available to others to build up stations. We have always acknowledged a responsibility regarding improvements, which are directed purely to getting the country populated. Therefore, when the hon. member introduces a practical suggestion of this kind, he should receive support. The Minister said the cost of inspection would be great, and that the Government could not police the provision. That is no justification for allowing the present state of affairs to continue. We know perfectly well that we are not doing justice to the North. I recently travelled along the coast, and it was pathetic to note the decline of population and of the towns between Geraldton and Wyndham. While Carnarvon presented a prosperous appearance, other towns had declined greatly since my previous visit. This decline is due purely to the

decrease of population. As the population of stations has declined, so business in the towns has declined, property has depreciated, and improvements have been allowed to fall into a state of disrepair. The only remedy is to increase population, and the way to increase it is to require those who have the right of control over the land for a given period to put the land to the use that Nature intended, with the assistance of man. We agree that it is a function of State to direct the improvement of its lands, and why not do it in a practical way? Why say that the difficulty of inspection prevents serious consideration being given to the amendment? The Minister states that the passing of the amendment may embarrass the pastoralists. If it is rejected, we may impoverish the State, which should come first. I do not want to injure individuals, but the pastoralist is really injuring himself by trying to monopolise land he cannot use, but has to pay for. Many of these areas have been in occupation for 20 years or more. It is fair to assume that the improvements necessary have already been effected, and yet we know there are large tracts of country which are never likely to be improved, simply because the State has not exacted from the holders a fair return in the way of providing for a greater number of people. The amendment would put right what has been an outstanding wrong for many years. The area principally affected is a valuable one, but is being retarded by indifferent methods of occupation. I suggest the Minister should reconsider his opposition. The carrying capacity of these leases ought to be in proportion to what the land can really do. They can only yield to their full capacity if the necessary improvements are effected.

Mr. COVERLEY: I support the amendment. The remarks of the Minister were really in its favour. He said if the proviso was adopted it could not be enforced, because the department were not in a position to police the Act. I can, therefore, see no reason for his opposition to the proposal. There are many pastoralists who try to make a profit out of quantity instead of quality. The amendment would force them to help themselves, because they would have to adopt some other policy. The Bill did not receive the consideration it deserved on the second reading, and the fact that it was referred to a select committee does not mean that we must now accept it *holus bolus*. There

are just as many anomalies in reference to pastoral holdings in the southern part of the State as there are in the Kimberleys. I hope the amendment will be carried.

Mr. WISE: The Minister has advanced no logical plan for the successful occupation of all the lands that have been taken up. That is the strongest point in favour of the amendment. The area mentioned may be a debatable point, but that can be reviewed subsequently. If these leases are not successfully occupied, they should not be granted in such large areas. If the land is not developed, it is no asset to the State, and no financial institution would regard it as such. The policing of the Act does not come into the question, because it is obviously impossible to cover it all in that way. I shall be interested to hear any practical suggestions that will lead to our pastoral leases being more profitably utilised than is likely to come about if this amendment is passed.

Mr. MARSHALL: This amendment opens up the whole question of pastoral leases. I am afraid we have learned no lesson from the experience of other countries. In the older States the great tendency is towards closer settlement and the cutting up of big estates.

Mr. Wise: That is not the object of the amendment.

Mr. MARSHALL: The tendency is to increase the productivity of the land to the greatest possible extent. Of course it would be difficult to police this amendment.

Mr. Wise: It throws the responsibility on the lessee.

Mr. MARSHALL: We are gradually learning to our sorrow that instead of forcing into full use every acre of land adjacent to our ports and railways, we have allowed millions of acres of land to remain unproductive, and are causing prospective settlers to reach out to isolated parts of the State where they can never hope to make good. In my electorate there is an area held jointly by three lessees, and comprising about 3,000,000 acres. Of this huge area I do not think 500,000 acres can be said to be improved or stocked or provided with wells. On the other hand, there are settlers 250 miles north of Wiluna who can never make a success of their ventures.

The Minister for Lands: To what area are you referring?

Mr. MARSHALL: It is not far from Nannine and Meekatharra. The Minister

knows the lessees well. The amendment may work hardship in some cases. Quite a number of pastoralists would not be able to comply with the provisions of the amendment but we have reached the stage at which we must consider the welfare of the State. The interests of the few must be sacrificed in order to conserve those of the State. Lessons to be gained from elsewhere point to the necessity for pursuing the course suggested by the member for Gascoyne. We cannot continue to build railways and roads through vast areas of fertile land that are held out of productivity to the exclusion of those who desire to embark upon industry. The effect of that is to force the latter into the remote portions where they have no reasonable chance of success. There are three factors governing conditions in the North—fertility of soil, proximity to port or railway, and rainfall. Large areas that would be affected by the amendment are to be found within close proximity of the railhead, sea-ports or rivers that are not far from the coast. There are large areas inland and I do not wish to decry their value, but the areas nearer the coast have the natural advantage of a better rainfall than that enjoyed by areas in the interior. Unless the amendment be agreed to, we cannot force the pastoralists, who are holding properties under such advantageous conditions, adequately to develop their properties. Further south we find railways being constructed through large areas of country that are not closely settled. The railways are taken out long distances in order to serve people who are running a few sheep and cattle. People are forced further afield and the State has to confront requests for extensions of the railway services in order to meet the requirements of the pastoralists. Instead of having hundreds of people settled on areas adjacent to the railways, many people have to go much further afield and then clamour for the construction of similar facilities for themselves. We should make it clear that we desire these areas to be more closely settled and to secure an increase in our population. Unless we take steps to conserve the interests of the State, we shall be heading along the road to destruction. Quite recently we heard it urged that all Governments in this State had neglected the North-West, and that proposals had been made to grant some of the most fertile portions of that part of the

State to private companies so that the area might be developed because the Government had failed to do so. We will develop that part of the State when we have the opportunity, but the laws that prevail to-day make it impossible for us to do so. People become land hungry. We have been told by experienced agriculturists who have sat in this Chamber that many of the farmers have been in a deplorable position because of their land hunger, and the same applies to the pastoralist. Perhaps it is thought that unless they have a huge area they will not be able to sell their leases. They do not hold their properties in order to make homes for themselves, but hold them for jobbing purposes only. We should not encourage that. Just how long are present conditions to be permitted to continue? Hundreds of young men have finished their University education and find themselves at pick-and-shovel work. There are no avenues for them such as they had expected. If we did something that would make land available for them, success might be achieved that way. I recognise the difficulty mentioned by the Minister with regard to the leasing of the holdings, but we should have courage enough to call a halt and say that the pastoral holdings must be developed along the lines we lay down. While some must go by the board in the process, that has always been the position. No Government ever instituted reforms without somebody being hurt. The time has long gone by when a review of the pastoral lease conditions by Parliament was due. Just imagine the temerity of the pastoralists who approached Parliament with a request for a reduction of rent because of the price received for their products, at a time when one-third only of their properties were utilised. Had they relinquished the remaining two-thirds of their properties, they would have been saved the payment of two-thirds of their rent, and at the same time allowed others to get a footing in the industry. I support the amendment in the interest of the State and of Australians yet unborn.

Mr. WELSH: I cannot support the amendment, particularly as it will affect the Kimberley areas. The difficulties of the pastoralists there are great enough already, in view of the tick trouble, which prevents them from selling their cattle. In those circumstances, they cannot be expected further to improve their holdings. I do not know

where the areas are that the member for Gascoyne referred to as being unimproved. I do not know what the position may be in the south, but in the northern parts, there are not many acres that are not properly improved. Very small sections of the pastoral leases in my electorate are not improved to the full extent.

Mr. RODOREDA: I was surprised at the opposition of the Minister to the amendment. To say that we could not police such a provision is no argument against the amendment. The present Act has never been fully policed.

Mr. Coverley: It might be if we had a Minister strong enough to do it.

Mr. RODOREDA: If we do not embody the necessary provisions in the Bill, we shall never be able to police it, and we shall have to accept the blame for the position as it will continue to be. The amendment gets down to the basis upon which the development of the North-West should be carried out, and it is a vital matter from that standpoint. I would not blame the pastoralists for fighting against the provision, but we must consider the matter from the standpoint of the State and not of the individual. One phase that has not been touched upon yet refers to lessees who hold leases that are not contiguous. A lessee may make a homestead on one of his leases and improve it, while doing nothing with other sections he holds under lease 40 or 50 miles away, with perhaps another station intervening. No one else could take up those leases that are unimproved. We have been told that these areas are held in reserve, but I will guarantee that if you put sheep on them, they could not live. There is no water on the leases and there are no wells or windmills. I can cite three such areas in my electorate. I know of a concrete instance where last year a man applied for a block of about 100,000 acres adjacent to his 20,000-acre holding. His desire was to make a station of the property from which he could get a living. Unknown to him however, the 100,000 acres had been held for nine years by a person whose other property was 50 miles away, and actually separated from the 100,000 acres by another station. If that kind of thing is permitted to go on unchecked, then we shall have only ourselves to blame if the land is not utilised. A great deal of that country at present held by large lessees is not being used. It would be

settled if it were taken from the present lessees and thrown open for selection. If the present lessees are not prepared to spend £10 per thousand acres on improvements, as required by the Act, they should get off and allow others to take up the country. I have lived in the pastoral areas for 15 years, and have an intimate knowledge of what has been going on. I assure the Committee that the leases to which I have referred are being held but are not used. One person, or a group of persons, in my electorate have held up 200,000 acres for 25 years without a fence around it or a hoof on it. I have no doubt that others could get a decent living from the area, but as the Act stands at present, no one else can get it. The position seems to be now that we shall have to save the pastoralist from himself. He will not carry out the improvements when he has the money. Therefore we must force him to carry them out by putting the law in motion.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member who has just spoken said that there were hundreds of thousands of acres which had not been improved for many years. The Act as it stands to-day can deal with the lessees of those areas. The land is liable to forfeiture and, if the instances which have been quoted are brought under the notice of the department, forfeiture must follow unless good reasons are advanced by the lessees for the non-fulfilment of the conditions. Under the Act as it stands, every acre must be improved. We know that it has taken the pastoralists all their time to hold on to their areas. In the East Kimberley districts the cattle-growers have no hope of getting a market.

Mr. Wise: That will not always be so.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Take the facts as they are.

Mr. Coverley: Why do some stations get £6 6s. for a bullock and other stations only 15s. or 16s.?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not propose to explain that. I suppose there are reasons; perhaps it is that the better stock fetches the higher price. We know that when the market improves everything becomes brighter. A great many people would not think of embarking on this business while things are bad, but as soon as there is a turn of the tide, they want to get in, and they proceed to jump on those unfortunate people who have battled for years.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: A man might impoverish himself by having unimproved land.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Why does a man go to the far North? Is it because it is a pleasant place in which to live? He goes there because his desire is to make good. We know that he cannot make good unless he improves his property, and so the pastoralists battled on for years, and they find that when conditions improve they can get a market for their stock, and at the same time, a number of people who, in other circumstances, would not go there, come along then and want to jump the leases. The proviso of the hon. member gives no option whatever to the Minister. The Minister would have to forfeit even though he knew in his own mind that forfeiture would be outrageous. I realise the necessity for insisting upon improvements being carried out, but the proviso leaves no alternative but to forfeit if the improvements are not made. My opinion is that the proviso may lead to injustice being done, an injustice which hon. members themselves would not do.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: This question of improvements has been raised on various occasions in past years. When the Labour Party were in opposition, we were always loud in our claims that this kind of thing should not be done. Now three members coming direct from northern constituencies are urging the Government to do something in the way of reform, something for which we have been agitating for the past 20 years. The Minister agrees that there is some virtue in the amendment, though he considers it somewhat drastic. Surely the hon. gentleman should agree to some tightening up, so that reform may result. We have been preaching reform for too long, and the people are getting tired of the preaching. Hon. members recently elected for the northern constituencies submit a proposal by which reform can be effected; and if it is not effected now, it may not come about for many years. If the Minister does not like the amendment, he might let the clause stand over for further consideration. The outstanding need of the North is that improvement conditions shall be tightened up. We hold that lands should not be monopolised and remain unused, nor that only black labour should be employed. Lessees should employ the labour needed to make improvements.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	13
Noes	..	..	..	26

Majority against .. 13

#### AYES.

Mr. Clothier	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Coverley	Mr. F. C. L. Smith
Mr. Cross	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Hegney	Mr. Wansbrough
Miss Holman	Mr. Wise
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Marshall	(Teller.)

#### NOES.

Mr. Brockman	Mr. Needham
Mr. Collier	Mr. North
Mr. Ferguson	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Patrick
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Seward
Mr. Kenneally	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Latham	Mr. Thorn
Mr. McCallum	Mr. Troy
Mr. McDonald	Mr. Welsh
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Wilcock
Mr. Millington	Mr. Withers
Mr. Moloney	Mr. Doney
	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Mr. WISE: I move an amendment—

That the proviso to the clause be struck out.

The proviso does not do what it purports to do. It has no tendency whatever to improve the condition of the stock on any particular holding. I would not suggest any proviso tending to obviate the spending of a maximum amount of £10 per 1,000 acres on improvements. With that maximum it should be obligatory on every lessee to spend the amount. If the land is not improved to some extent, it is not fit to carry any stock whatever; and if it is not improved to the extent of the maximum, it certainly is not fit to carry stud stock. No one in this Chamber is a more ardent supporter than I am of improved stock where the conditions are suitable to the carrying of such stock; but let hon. members ask themselves how stud stock can be an asset in unfenced areas, where cattle are permitted to roam over hundreds of square miles. Under the proviso, evasion of the improvement conditions will be practicable if there is a receipt to show that stud stock have been introduced. I would not accept it as tangible evidence of improvement if stud stock have been introduced. What chance would well-bred stock have in competition with the "Micky" bulls? It would be a case of the survival of the fittest, with

the stud bull running a bad second. Unless a lessee sincerely endeavours to develop his holding far beyond the maximum provided by the improvement conditions, he certainly will not have the land in a fit state to receive stud stock. Evasion of improvement conditions should not be facilitated. If a lessee has not spent £10 per 1,000 acres in improvements, it is highly inadvisable for him to introduce stud stock.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS:** I am not specially wedded to this proviso. Its weakness is that stud stock would be of no value if roaming over a large area of unimproved country. Since the Bill has been before a select committee I have realised that if stud stock are substituted for improvements, such stud stock cannot be of much value. I can imagine that in the Kimberleys—

**MR. COVERLEY:** Why take the Kimberleys? The whole of the North is just as bad, and some of the southern areas are no better.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS:** I have been told that in the Kimberleys scrub bulls—

**MR. COVERLEY:** You have them in your own district.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS:** No. My district is all fenced. I do not think that in my district there are a thousand acres not included within a fence. I have been told that in the Kimberleys scrub bulls are responsible for the deterioration of the cattle, and that scrub bulls kill stud bulls. In a South African newspaper I read that the importation of stud stock effected no improvement there until the wild bulls had been disposed of.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

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

Clauses 103 to 113—agreed to.

Clause 114—Lessee under the Act of 1917 may surrender lease and apply for a new lease:

**MR. COVERLEY:** I move an amendment—

That in line 6 "that" be struck out and the following inserted in lieu:—"The lessee shall comply with Section 6 of the Shearers' Accommodation Act, 1912, and shall be bound by Sections 12 and 13 of the said Act."

[50]

The purpose of the amendment is to secure decent accommodation for those employed on pastoral stations. On some stations comfortable quarters are provided for the employees, but other stations supply no accommodation at all. The Bill went before a select committee, but somehow that committee overlooked the fact that there were others to be considered besides the pastoralists, and so it is left for me to move this amendment. I hope the Committee will support it.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** I cannot accept the amendment, for it is not relevant to the Bill.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 115 to 162—agreed to.

Clause 163—Penalty for trespass:

**MR. WISE:** I move an amendment—

That in line 7 "£100" be struck out and "£25" inserted in lieu.

There is no necessity for such a penalty, even if there be necessity for such a clause. It is possible that, to protect the rights of the Crown, a clause of this nature should be included. But why, when a person, perhaps in all innocence, is occupying Crown lands, should he be subject to a penalty of £100? In many of the older settled districts, where no surveys have been made for perhaps 40 years, it is not possible to define a boundary or to know whether the lessee is on his approved area. I can imagine that the Minister will endeavour to justify the penalty of £100 by saying the Crown must have its rights protected. That may be so, but a fine of £100 is entirely out of proportion to a misdemeanour, if such it be called.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS:** I have no objection to the amendment.

**MR. LATHAM:** You will be sorry.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS:** It has never been used.

**MR. LATHAM:** Because of the deterrent effect.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS:** The magistrate has discretionary power to make the fine fit the offence. In 36 years the provision has never been used.

**MR. LATHAM:** Why alter it now?

**MR. WISE:** Why consolidate the measure?

**MR. LATHAM:** If it has done no harm, keep it. It is a preventive.

Mr. Marshall: Why give false teeth to an aged person when he is just about to die?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: For unlawful occupation, I consider a fine of £25 sufficient. The offender could also be ejected, and a continuance of the offence would render the person liable to a further fine.

Mr. LATHAM: The member for Gascoyne doubtless thinks he is doing something to assist somebody.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: We do not do things to assist any individual. The penalty is too high.

Mr. LATHAM: The member for Guildford-Midland has attempted in this Chamber to assist many people. The penalty has never been used, but it has had a deterrent effect against trespassing on Crown lands. If the fine were £25, it might pay a man to forfeit that amount. On one occasion a person erected a building in a proposed townsite, believing that possession was nine points of the law, and refused to remove the building until the law was invoked. Unless a fairly substantial fine be provided, it might pay such an individual to pay the fine and continue trespassing. The measure will apply to the whole of the State. A man with travelling stock might reach a camping reserve with water supply and a fair amount of feed. If he stayed longer than he should do, he would be depriving the next mob of stock of the right of feed. It would probably pay him to forfeit £25 but not £100.

Mr. Marshall: He could not do it under the droving Act. He has to go forward.

Mr. LATHAM: It may not be a camping reserve. Many reserves used for camping are not camping reserves within the meaning of the Travelling Stock Act. Though a maximum penalty of £100 is provided, a fine of £1 could be inflicted.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Why not make it £1,000?

Mr. LATHAM: We have capital punishment, but seldom is it inflicted.

The CHAIRMAN: There is nothing about capital punishment in the Bill.

Mr. LATHAM: The hon. member might provide capital punishment as a penalty for this offence instead of a fine of £100. The penalty of £100 is not injuring anyone.

Mr. Wise: I know that a danger exists.

Mr. LATHAM: No danger can exist when there has not been a prosecution. No good purpose would be served by altering

the penalty. The trouble is that the member for Gascoyne is regarding the matter only from the viewpoint of the North-West. We have at South Perth a Class A reserve carrying a crop of valuable pine. If a man camped there and set fire to it, more than £100 worth of damage might be done. In the interests of the State's assets, the higher penalty should be retained. A magistrate would not impose an unreasonable fine.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. WISE: I move an amendment—

That the words "The onus of proof of authority to do the act complained of shall be on the party accused" be struck out.

To place the onus of proof on the person accused is quite a wrong principle to embody in any legislation, but in this instance it is perhaps more un-British. When the words proposed to be exercised are analysed, it will be obvious to members that they should be deleted.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have no objection to the amendment. Proof should be provided by the prosecution, not by the defendant.

Mr. Ferguson: The provision relates to proof of authority, not of guilt.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is the onus of proof of authority to occupy the land. If the person has no authority, the Crown should prove it, not compel the accused person to prove his authority.

Mr. Wise: He is innocent until proved guilty.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I hold that every person should be deemed innocent until found guilty.

Mr. LATHAM: I agree that an accused person should not have to prove his innocence, but the reference to onus of proof of authority means that the accused has to show some authority for being on the land. Whenever an officer of the Crown appears in a court of law, he has to show his authority, and that is all the clause requires.

Mr. Wise: He may be there without authority and in all innocence.

Mr. LATHAM: He would be liable to a penalty whether innocent or otherwise.

Mr. Marshall: Why should not the accuser prove that the man is on the land unlawfully?

Mr. LATHAM: It is difficult to do so.

The Minister for Lands: The authority would be a title.

Mr. LATHAM: Members should appreciate the difference between a person being required to prove his innocence and producing authority for being on the land.

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

Clauses 164 to 171, Schedules 1 to 28—agreed to.

New clause:

Mr. WISE: I move—

That a new clause be inserted, to follow Clause 103, as follows:—"During any period of the lease in any normal season with full consideration for drought or other acts of God, the lessee shall be liable to the forfeiture of such lease if he wilfully abuses any part of the lease by overstocking greatly beyond the carrying capacity of such lease; this section to apply particularly to frontage blocks referred to in Section 96."

One of the greatest economic losses in Australia represented by thousands of cattle and sheep is due more to overstocking than to drought. This statement sums up in a few words the thoughts of many people extending over a number of years. The stocking and improvement clauses of a Bill of this nature must go hand in hand. With maximum improvements based on an expenditure of £10 per thousand acres the tendency has not been effectively to occupy very much of the country; rather has it been to occupy only those parts which are richly endowed by nature. Wherever there is a natural watercourse, in almost every instance the land is hopelessly overstocked. Within a few miles of such places there may be luscious feed, whereas no provision has been made to depasture stock upon it. The overstocking of a great deal of our heritage is a very serious question. Many parts of the country are beyond redemption because they have been so heavily overstocked. It is my desire to endeavour to bring about a better balance in the stocking of many of our pastoral areas. Those portions of the pastoral districts of Australia, which have been richly endowed by nature with special feeding benefits or forage for stock, or other facilities or resources, show strong evidence of having been hopelessly ruined especially along the frontages to watercourses. I know of places where on one side of the fence judicious stocking has been practised, and stock is be-

ing carried now to the greatest economic extent, whereas on the other side of the fence there is nothing but a wind-swept plain. The holders of the latter have only been concerned about getting as much as they could out of the land at the minimum of expense to themselves. There are many examples in our own State of country which cannot be reconditioned. The subject has interested me professionally for many years, and I have for a long time had in mind the possibility of doing something to recondition our abused pastoral areas.

Mr. Stubbs: Do you refer to areas which have been abandoned?

Mr. WISE: No. Wherever there has been a frontage, or any part of the country better endowed by nature than another, the carrying capacity has been so greatly exceeded that the locality has been ruined for numbers of generations. The pastoral areas of this State are a sacred trust which we should endeavour to protect. In my amendments I have had in view the proper and efficient utilisation of this heritage. Most of these leases are held at a nominal rental. The holders have to abide by certain improvement sections of the Act and have to carry out as a maximum certain conditions which ought to be the minimum. The time has arrived when we should insist upon this land no longer being wilfully abused. There are instances within a thousand miles of Perth in which pastoral country has had all the surface of the soil blown away through overstocking. Last year I brought under the notice of the Leader of the Opposition something of what was happening in this direction. One of our greatest troubles is to know what to do with wind-swept country that has been denuded of vegetation.

Mr. Stubbs: Are you referring to the Ord or the Fitzroy Valley?

Mr. WISE: To neither. The land I speak of is further south. I could take the hon. member to places where stocking has been carried out judiciously and where the country has been reconditioned in a few years, and the saltbush has reappeared; whereas not far away the land is bared to the bottom of the clay and the trees are standing out like dead sentinels, due to the thoughtlessness of the earlier holders of this country. It is with the object of protecting our heritage from a similar fate that I move this new clause. We cannot disregard what is happening. If we permit the present con-

ditions to continue, the land will not be worth much to anyone.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There is much room for argument in the proposed new clause. I commend the hon. member for his desire to prevent overstocking, which undoubtedly does take place. Who will determine whether a lease is understocked or overstocked, and on what basis will that be determined? I am very desirous of preventing overstocking, and have often felt that Parliament would have to do something to ensure the regrowth of edible shrubs on pastoral leases. In all this heavily-stocked country the young growth is eaten out by sheep as soon as it appears. It is possible that in the course of years, when the older timber dies out, there will be no younger growth to take its place. What Parliament will do, I do not know. If the Government carry out experiments to prevent the land from being overstocked, they will then have to compete with native vermin. What the sheep miss, the kangaroos will get. Unless the areas be made vermin-proof, it will be difficult to determine whether or not the edible plants will grow again. I am convinced that on a great deal of the older-settled country there is very little in the way of a new growth of edible shrubs, because it has been eaten out by stock when young. Some of the Murchison stations have been established for 50 years. With the best intentions in the world, the member for Gascoyne has desired the inclusion of a proviso in the Bill, but it would be difficult to enforce it. What has the member for Gascoyne in his mind? What does he consider is overstocking? Who will judge? Having regard to the varying carrying capacity of the Kimberleys, the North-West, the Gascoyne, the Murchison, the Eastern Goldfields, the Eucla and the South-West Divisions, who can determine what number of cattle or sheep must be regarded as constituting overstocking? What basis will there be?

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That will have to be based on evidence.

Mr. Coverley: You have the evidence taken by the Appraisement Board when they valued the land some years ago.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No.

Mr. Latham: In any event, each board would have a different idea.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If we are to accept the determination of the Appraisement Board to decide the carrying

capacity of areas, then I know of areas in which they overstated the carrying capacity.

Mr. Wise: You would require to go on local evidence only.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I know it appears to be easy.

Mr. Coverley: You accepted the evidence of the board respecting the value of the leases for rental purposes.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, but that was merely speculation. We had to assume that the country would carry 10 sheep to 1,000 acres, but we know that some would carry 20 sheep whereas others would only carry 10 sheep to 1,000 acres. In some seasons, the country would carry not more than three sheep to 1,000 acres.

Mr. Coverley: On that assumption, you have granted them special conditions under the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, but nothing that they do not already enjoy.

The Premier: The Bill is merely a consolidation measure.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, there is nothing new in it.

Mr. Wise: There is nothing new under the sun.

Mr. Latham: Except you; you are new.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It has to be realised that there are cycles of good seasons. On the Murchison, we had an extraordinary run of splendid seasons from 1904 to 1910. Then suddenly there was a year when the rainfall was short.

Mr. Wise: The year when there is a good rainfall is abnormal.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No. I have been for 35 years in the Murchison district, and I have known years in succession when the seasons were good.

Mr. Thorn: If some members took the trouble to travel through the North, they would understand the position.

Mr. Marshall: You have never looked on the other side of the Darling Ranges!

Mr. Thorn: I know as much about Carnarvon as the member for Gascoyne. I have worked there.

Mr. Marshall: I cannot believe that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: During a succession of good years, naturally the squatter stocks up his holding, because the country will carry the sheep. Then there is a sudden drought, and the squatter is overstocked.

Mr. Ferguson: What would he do with the sheep?

Mr. Thorn: Cut their throats.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I admit that the intentions of the member for Gascoyne are good, as there is a danger of overstocking, but Parliament cannot provide an amendment in the Bill before the Committee to deal with the position. We cannot do that, because we have no basis. Parliament should appoint a competent body of persons to determine what is the carrying capacity of the country. That body should not be the Appraisement Board, but should consist of an authority competent to determine what the carrying capacity of the country really is. That determination should not be in respect to the country as a whole, but should deal with the various districts. The amendment could only do harm or be a dead letter; it could not be enforced.

Mr. Thorn: It could merely serve to be an irritant.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The squatter would say that his holding was not overstocked, and an officer of the department might say that it was. Who would be the best judge? Whose word would the court take, that of the official or of the squatter? I would take the squatter's word as against that of an official, because the squatter is no fool, and, in the main, he does not overstock his holding. In 99 instances out of 100, the land owner is the best judge, and so he should be. He has the personal experience.

Mr. Wise: I admit that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Now Parliament is to put in a proviso to say that he is not the best judge, and we are asked arbitrarily to fix his stocking capacity. I hope the Committee will not agree to the amendment. The member for Gascoyne and others concerned should interest themselves in having an inquiry carried out to determine the carrying capacity of the country in various parts of the State. I cannot accept the amendment. It would lead to useless quarrels between the department and the lessees that would have no good result. The department could not enforce the legislation, and no court of law would accept the official's word against that of a pastoralist. That is as it ought to be. I refuse to believe that any pastoralist would overstock his holding wilfully. I will not have it. No sane man would overstock his country.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: But you have agreed that country has been overstocked.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I agree this far, that in good seasons squatters are encouraged to carry stock just as the hon. member and I have overstocked our properties. We had to do it to make up for past losses.

Mr. Latham: I was overstocked three months ago, but the recent rain relieved the position.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Last year the Murchison was overstocked, and that applied for a period of three years. It is not overstocked to-day, but rather understocked. There may be some foolish people who do not know what the carrying capacity of their holding may be, but such individuals do not last. The man who has not the sense to know what the carrying capacity of his holding is cannot last long as a squatter. I will not agree to letting officials loose among the pastoralists to determine what stock they should carry. It would be perfectly ridiculous to do so, without having a basis, which has never been determined. I endorse much that the member for Gascoyne has said, but his amendment is premature. There should be a thorough inquiry regarding the carrying capacity of the country first, and even that would not be final, because of the conditions that vary with the seasons.

Mr. WISE: I am neither disappointed nor yet surprised at the attitude of the Minister. In moving the amendment, I was simply actuated by motives which in his heart and by his statement, the Minister has admitted to be correct. Members who have a knowledge of the pastoral areas in Western Australia or any other part of Australia, must know full well that much of the country has been ruined through overstocking, not through drought conditions. I can prove that to the Committee by first-hand evidence, which is offering in almost any pastoral district of the State where subdivisional or border fences would indicate what one man has done to improve his holding and is still carrying his stock, whereas on the other side of the fence the pastoralist has ruined his holding and cannot carry any stock. In many instances, a definite line of demarcation exists between those parts where the country is now reproducing itself although heavily stocked, whereas on the other side of the fence there is merely

a wind-swept waste. I am not concerned about the present holdings, but I view the matter from a much broader aspect. The land in question is that which is producing the exportable wealth of Australia. If we are to permit our heritage to be abused in the directions I have indicated, and allow it to be occupied under existing conditions, we shall certainly disregard any claims which our children may have to it in the future. I am not surprised that the Minister has rejected the amendment, but if the previous amendment I desired had been carried, it would have overcome every possibility of abusing the heritage that is ours. Had my amendment dealing with improvements been agreed to, it would have resulted in leases having to be effectively improved and effectively occupied. I am not, as some members have indicated, talking without my book on this subject. It is one that has interested me professionally and I have this in support of my attitude, that in my endeavours to recondition some of the land that has been abused, I have been the means of introducing over 250 different varieties of plants from other semi-arid countries of the world. From the professional point of view, it is heart-breaking. View it how members may like, whether from the standpoint of present productive capacity or the prospective productive capacity of the future, we shall not see much of the land reconditioned in our time. It was with a view to obviating any further persistence with such treatment that I moved the amendment. We had very little or no opportunity to speak on the second reading of the Bill, and therefore I am very grateful to the Minister and to you, Mr. Chairman, for having permitted us to ventilate our grievances.

Mr. COVERLEY: There is one point to which I desire to refer and about which the Minister appears to be a little astray. He asked what hon. members had in mind as the basis of what the carrying capacity of the areas would be. Surely that information is available in the Lands Department. It will be remembered that when the Act was being amended in 1917 it was provided that an appraisalment board was to be appointed to classify and revalue the areas. That board eventually travelled throughout the pastoral areas in the North and the South and took evidence from the occupiers, whether they were managers or owners of

the properties. That evidence was required to enable the board correctly to value the areas. All that information must at the moment be in the possession of the Lands Department. How, therefore, can the Minister say that we have no basis upon which to work? The carrying capacity of the leases is already in evidence possessed by the department.

New clause put and negatived.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

### ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the undermentioned Bills:—

1. Financial Emergency Tax.
2. Financial Emergency Tax Assessment Act Amendment.

### ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1933-34.

*In Committee of Supply.*

Debate resumed from the 10th October on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates; Mr. Hegney in the Chair.

*Vote—Legislative Council, £1,442:*

MR. NEEDHAM (Perth) [8.36]: During the course of the debate a comparison has been made between the position in the Federal arena and that of the States of Australia to-day. I realise the very difficult position in which the Treasurer of Western Australia finds himself because of the restrictions placed upon him by the Loan Council. Those restrictions also apply to the Treasurers in the other States. The Treasurers are working under very difficult conditions by reason of their being called upon to budget just according to the amount allowed to them by the Loan Council, and when comparing the position with that of the Federal Treasurer, one cannot but feel envious of the position of the Federal Treasurer. The State Treasurers have been compelled to budget according to the decisions arrived at at the conference of Premiers and described as the Premiers' Plan. We find that to-day the Federal Treasurer has money to burn and that he is distributing his surplus revenue in the way of largesse; one million here and one million there, distributing a surplus

which has accrued to him at the expense of the States. We find that the big land owners, the big taxpayers, are all getting some benefit, that in taxation alone for the remainder of the financial year the bigger taxpayers will benefit to the tune of over five millions sterling, whereas in the full year they will benefit to the extent of nearly seven millions sterling. To my mind it would have been much better for the Federal Treasurer to have rendered assistance to the State Treasurers with that surplus revenue, rather than dissipate it—I use the word “dissipate” advisedly—in the manner he has decided upon. During the regime of the Scullin Government, when revenue was certainly not buoyant—on the contrary it was very scarce—that Government did go to the assistance of the States to enable them to cope with the all-important question of unemployment. The Premiers’ Plan has not been responsible for reducing the workless army in Australia by a single man and while still the State Governments are labouring under the provisions of that plan, instead of the Federal Treasurer going to the help of the States as the Scullin Government did on two occasions, we find the Lyons Government distributing the revenue as I have said before, in the way of largesse to relieve people who really are not in need of that relief. The Premiers’ Plan had for its object the financing of Governments. That Plan, or that blot as I might call it, has been in existence now for three years, and still Budgets are not balanced as far as the States are concerned, whilst the question of unemployment is as grave to-day as it was three years ago. Balancing of Budgets does not mean everything, but the putting of men into proper employment does mean everything to Western Australia, and indeed to all the States. If assistance had been rendered by the Federal Government with that end in view, we might have been able to say that that Government had done its duty. In this State I think unemployment is decreasing solely as the result of the policy being adopted by the State Government. Hon. members sitting in opposition have made that statement. The member for Claremont (Mr. North) when speaking on the Estimates a few nights ago complimented the Government on the fact that unemployment in Western Australia was decreasing. The best evidence in that regard is the closing down of Blackboy Camp. That

is a healthy indication of the effect of the policy of the State Government. It is really deplorable to see a body of men herded together in a camp, fine vigorous men permitted only to do as much work as will enable them to pay for their keep, and their morale thus being destroyed. From that aspect I regard the intimation of the Minister for Employment that the camp is about to be closed as a sign for the better. Whether we are engaged in a military war or an economic war, it is the poorer people that suffer all the time. In every country the workers have borne the brunt of the war and its aftermath. To-day there are 30,000,000 unemployed, representing, with their dependants, the staggering figure of 100,000,000 people practically on the verge of starvation; and this in a world of plenty! In that regard the world is subservient to the financial oligarchy, who are responsible for all our present economic ills. There have been three years of economic war, the aftermath of four years of military war. Nineteen years ago the world was plunged into the vortex of war. There were four years of bloodshed. The fields of France and of Flanders were red with rivers of human blood. Men died then to end war. They fought in a war that was to end war. In those days we were told from every platform and by every newspaper that the war was waged to end war, and to-day we find ourselves on the brink of another world upheaval. The other night seated on the verandah of my home I gazed on the shrine in King’s Park to Australia’s illustrious dead, who died to end war. Looking on that shrine and looking on the world position of to-day, I ventured the thought that the sacrifice was made in vain. Those men gave their young lives for that worthy object, to end war; but the present position of affairs forces us to the conclusion, whether we like it or not, that the war in which they fought did not end war. I am greatly afraid that the world is on the verge of even a greater war. We have disarmament conferences, Locarno and other varieties of pacts; but they cannot prevent war. The League of Nations so far has proved impotent to stem the torrent of passion and the lust of conquest that are leading the world into another shambles. Recently we read in the Press of the latest kind of flying boat loaded with so many guns and bombs; and all this in the midst of a disarmament

conference. During the four years of slaughter, 13,000,000 men were withdrawn from the arena of production and transferred to the arena of destruction. Where did the money come from to wage that war? There was not sufficient real money in the world to pay for the cost of the war. Millions of men were slaughtered, and thousands of millions of pounds were expended on the purchase of weapons of destruction and for the training, clothing, feeding, transportation and maintenance of vast armies. I ask again, where did the money come from? From inflation pure and simple. During those years in this country of ours the currency was inflated to the extent of 400 per cent. But when to-day we ask for money to clothe, feed and house men, we are told that there are no funds available. That has been the cry during these three years of economic warfare. That period has known just as much misery, just as much destitution and anxiety as was known during the four years of military warfare. True it is that so many lives are not lost during the economic war, but the lives lived by millions of people during the last three years have been practically a living death. Whilst there was any amount of money of some kind or other to carry on the four years of destruction, during the past three years it has been a struggle to get sufficient money to give a little sustenance to the vast army of unemployed. Should, unfortunately, the world again be plunged into a shambles, should the manhood of this country again rush to the fields of war, assuredly there would be no scarcity of money. Money would be got somewhere, somehow. There would be any amount of food and clothing available if, unfortunately, the world was plunged into another war—which God forbid! I say with all feeling that never was the time so ripe as is the present for cannon fodder. I can see armies of men, idle and discontented, half-fed, responding to the call when the tocsin of war sounds again. Irrespective of any patriotic motive, merely from the desire for food, clothing and shelter, they would respond. Never, I repeat, was the world in a position to draw on so many men for cannon fodder as it is to-day. Whilst there was money to burn during the years of military war, it has been extremely scarce during the three years of economic difficulty. When

the men whom the battlefields spared had to be replaced in industry so that world markets might be restored, inflation had to continue. The result was that debts increased in greater ratio than population and production. Debts, with interest and exchange, reached Himalayan heights. To-day the workers of this country, like the workers of other countries, are carrying an intolerable burden of debt. The inflation policy accentuated the position brought about by war profiteers. There were numbers of these profiteers, as we all know—too many of them, unfortunately; profiteers who had accumulated millions of pounds' worth of long-term securities.

Mr. Marshall: Patriotism also inspired them.

Mr. NEEDHAM: They said, "Go to the front, young man, whilst I remain here looking over the top for the daily increase in my bank account." Since 1930 we of the Labour Party have been accused of endeavouring to bring about a change in the monetary system by inflation; but I think we have proved conclusively that we are not inflationists. We are anti-deflationists. Our policy might be expressed in one word as reflation. I have referred to the intolerable burden of debt carried by the workers of this young Australia. The fall in prices accentuated the burden of debt, together with the interest bill and exchange. Now I come to the recent World Economic Conference. Reading the results of that conference, and looking at its decision—or may I say indecision—I find a bankruptcy of statesmanship in the representatives of the capitalist system. At that conference were the representatives of 66 nations. They assembled in London under the title of the World Economic Conference. All that conference could do after weeks of deliberation was to recommend a reduction of production, reduction of foodstuffs when there are in the world a hundred million people on the verge of starvation. If ever there was a verification of the old adage that the mountain laboured and brought forth a mouse, we had it there. Never have I read of so much mental bankruptcy as was evidenced at that conference. It might have been thought that the three years of economic blizzard, which is still raging, would have afforded sufficient evidence for those men to have shown the world the way out of the cataclysm in which it is involved; but the

only thing they did was to recommend a reduction in the production of foodstuffs. If proof were wanted that the monetary and economic system under which we live have collapsed, the decision, or rather the indecision, of that conference supplies that proof. As I have said, the major problem confronting us to-day is unemployment. It might not be out of place if I refer to the policy of the Australian Labour Party on this all-important question. I ask members to go back along the road of memory to 1930 when, in the Federal Parliament, the Australian Labour Party launched its monetary policy, a policy which had for its object the combating of the wave of unemployment which was then beginning to spread throughout the land. One of the first acts of the Scullin Ministry was to send to the Senate a Bill providing for a fiduciary issue of notes to the amount of £18,000,000. That Bill had no trouble at all in passing the House of Representatives, but it then had to run the gauntlet of a hostile Senate. Senators insisted that a fiduciary issue would be disastrous, that it would ruin the credit of Australia, that it would destroy confidence in Australia, and generally declared that no note should be fiduciary. Senators of that day conveniently forgot that to all intents and purposes at that very time there was a fiduciary issue; that practically three-fourths of the Australian note issue of that day was fiduciary. The law at that time compelled a reserve in gold of 25 per cent., so that three £1 notes out of every four were practically fiduciary. Each note carried a line to the effect that on demand gold would be paid for it. It is well known that if a demand had been made for the simultaneous payment of all those notes, only 25 per cent. of the demand could have been met. So to that extent three-fourths of the Australian note issue of that day was practically fiduciary. The Scullin Government, following on the rejection of that fiduciary note proposal, attempted to put another part of its financial policy into operation, the setting up of a central reserve bank; and also attempted to amend the Commonwealth Bank Act so as to restore to the Commonwealth Bank all the power it had when it was originally instituted by the Labour Party in 1911. But all those proposals went by the board, for they were defeated in the Senate. Had the fiduciary plans of the Federal Labour Gov-

ernment been agreed to by the Senate, we would not have had such an army of unemployed in the Commonwealth as we have to-day. That fiduciary proposal for the release of credit was simply asking the Senate to lend to the nation £18,000,000, an overdraft on the nation's credit. It was estimated that in the first year of that issue 50,000 men would have been placed in employment, in the second year another 50,000 men, and in the third year still another 50,000, or an aggregate of 150,000 men placed in full employment. And the benefit of that system would not have stopped there, because the employment of those 150,000 men would have led to the employment of others, and thus the spending power of the community would have been immensely increased. But the Senate rejected that measure and every other measure sent up by the Scullin Government to try to relieve the tension at that time. There was another feature of the activities of that Government which is worth referring to in view of what has happened since then. I may say that £6,000,000 of the fiduciary note issue was to have been devoted to the wheat industry. I venture to declare the wheat farmers to-day are sorry they did not help to return to the Senate in 1931 sufficient senators to put the Scullin policy into operation. As I say, the fiduciary note issue would have been used in this way: £6,000,000 was to be devoted to the wheat industry, and £12,000,000 to public works, which would have been expended at the rate of £1,000,000 per month. Despite the opposition of the Senate to the fiduciary note issue of £18,000,000, all the Australian note issue to-day is practically fiduciary, because there is not an ounce of gold in the vaults of the Commonwealth Treasury held in reserve against the note issue, which amounts to £47,000,000. I repeat that there is no gold reserve to meet it. The Scullin Ministry proposed to ship overseas and to sell the gold reserve for the purpose of utilising some of the proceeds for the redemption of overseas debts, the balance to be held in British securities as a reserve against any future emergency, and to ease overseas interest, which was then very heavy. The Scullin Ministry proposed to ship overseas to London £10,000,000 worth of gold; but again the Senate opposed that proposal. It was strongly opposed in the House of Representatives also, and the present Prime Minister of Australia, Mr.

Lyons, who was then Leader of the Opposition in the House of Representatives, made use of these words—

With the shipment of gold, nothing would be left but a fiduciary note issue. Once our gold backing has gone, confidence will be destroyed.

All the gold is gone now. This same gentleman, who is to-day Prime Minister, has sold all the gold to London, a policy to which he objected when it was proposed by Mr. Scullin. That was Mr. Lyons in 1931, but Mr. Lyons in 1933 has sold all that gold and sent it to London. And our £47,000,000 of Australian note issue to-day is what Mr. Lyons called it, practically a fiduciary issue. When Mr. Scullin proposed to send the gold reserve overseas, Mr. Lyons roundly condemned it and said it would create and impose on the people of Australia a fiduciary issue. But do we ever see in the Press to-day anything to the effect that our note issue is fiduciary? Do the Press condemn the present Prime Minister for having sold the gold to London? The only difference is that an anti-Labour Government with a majority in a National Parliament have done the very thing they condemned in a Labour Government; and they were backed up by the Press in their condemnation of it. The Prime Minister, Mr. Lyons, sold the gold reserve of £11,250,000 and shipped it overseas and so, according to him, all confidence in Australia has gone. I have mentioned these things, in the first place to contrast the position in the Federal arena with that existing in the State, to contrast the buoyancy of Federal revenue with the stringency in the State revenue; to point to the difficulties the State Treasurers have in meeting their obligations, and to the fact that the surplus which the Federal Treasurer now has is, in my view, being dissipated and disposed of in a wrong way. The only consolation one can see in the Federal Budget is that the Federal Treasurer has graciously agreed to abandon the amusements tax. I suppose we have to be thankful for small mercies, and I presume the Treasurer adopts the attitude that the smallest donations are thankfully received, but I contend, with other members who have preceded me in this debate, that there were other fields of taxation that the Federal Treasurer could easily have evacuated. Many years ago some avenues of taxation that the Federal Govern-

ment took to themselves were instituted really as war measures. That was the excuse given at the time; I happened to be in the Federal Parliament in those days. The Federal Government gradually trespassed on the income preserves of the State, and when they were questioned as to the reason why, invariably the answer was, "The necessities of war." When the war was over, the obligations which the war had imposed still necessitated their encroaching upon those fields of taxation. The war, however, has been over for a long time, and the Federal Government have had surpluses to play with in many years, and they could easily have evacuated the field of income taxation, but have not done so. I made similar observations when I was in the Federal House, and protested against the encroachments upon the States' preserves. Now, in view of the buoyancy of the Federal revenue on the one hand and the difficulty of State Treasurers on the other hand, I think the Federal Government could have gone further than merely to abandon the amusement tax. I express the hope that the policy the State Government are pursuing will eventually enable us to combat unemployment. Slowly but surely, I consider, an inroad is being made on the army of unemployed in our midst, but I feel sure members will agree that our position cannot be considered in any way safe or prosperous until every man in the army of the workless is employed. I hope the Government will succeed in bringing about that desirable state of affairs.

**MR. SAMPSON** (Swan) [9.18]: As I may be absent when the departmental items are considered, I venture to make a few remarks on two or three subjects at this stage. They are not matters that cover a sum of £80,000,000, or anything like the amounts to which the previous speaker has referred, but they are matters of considerable importance to the State. The first one concerns workers' homes. The Workers' Homes Board have done very good work, but in my opinion it is being hampered because the maximum amount permitted for the erection of a home is in excess of the sum that should be granted. I am advised that a large number of applications, many of which have been approved, cannot be carried into effect—that is, the buildings cannot be erected—because of the Treasurer's difficulty to provide

the requisite funds. The maximum amount that the board advance for the erection of a home is £700. A deposit of 10 per cent. is required, and the land for the building may provide portion or the whole of the deposit. Apart from the deposit, certain fees are payable for plans and specifications and supervision of construction. Those fees amount generally to £15 or £20. In my opinion the board might well consider their policy. The maximum is unnecessarily high. Many builders are able to do what is necessary—there is ample money for the erection of homes—and if the builders were given greater opportunity to carry out their work, a building revival would be brought about much quicker than otherwise would be the case. In addition a number of building societies carry on excellent work enabling houses of varying values to be erected to suit the needs of the public generally. Their enterprise warrants the utmost support. It may be considered that the matter is not an important one, but I claim it is important inasmuch as the welfare of a large section of the people is concerned. If, instead of up to £700 being provided, the maximum was reduced, it would make possible the erection of a larger number of homes for those for whom the scheme of workers' homes was designed, namely, those who are on or possibly near the basic wage and who, in other circumstances, might not have an opportunity to secure a home. I hope that the policy of the board will be reviewed. Another matter to which I desire to refer affects the railways. It would be a good thing if the old system of issuing return fares were restored. At present the return fare is just double the single fare. This frequently means that when a traveller desires to visit some outlying part such as Mullewa, Meekatharra or Wiluna, he takes a single ticket, and when at his destination receives an invitation to return by motor car, or possibly with two or three others arranges for a car to bring him back. Thus the railways lose revenue that would otherwise come their way.

Mr. Wansbrough: What would he do with the return portion if he came back by motor car.

Mr. SAMPSON: That is a matter the traveller might discuss with an officer of the department. Certain it is that when a single ticket only is taken, the traveller has an opportunity to return by other means and the

department lose roughly half the money they would otherwise receive. Again there is the matter of excursions to the goldfields and to the agricultural districts. There are winter excursions to the goldfields, but they are limited to the season of the racing carnival. I have nothing to say against that, but at such times the hotels are full, and there is not the opportunity to secure accommodation that occurs before and after the holding of the carnival. Here again is an opportunity for the Railway Department to secure additional revenue. I have no desire to indulge in destructive criticism; far from it. I admire some of the efforts of the Railway Department. Their reso tours and hikes are commendable. But there are opportunities for the department to secure increased revenue. I am told that the rates for the carriage of small lines of goods vary considerably. My advice is that biscuits are carried at one rate and tea at another rate. This makes it difficult for the merchant to ascertain just what the transport of his goods will cost. There is no corresponding difficulty with the motor trucks; they have a definite rate for a certain class of goods. It would be well if the railway authorities looked carefully into the matter and revised the rate book so that merchants could more easily ascertain what their costs would be. On the fields a few days ago I was told that four-fifths of the trade of the goldfields had been lost to the railways of Western Australia.

Mr. Ferguson: The goods come from the other States?

Mr. SAMPSON: Yes. It is stated that the charges levied by the Western Australian railways are killing the trade of our railways. Because of this we have the spectacle of fruit and vegetables being taken to Kalgoorlie from the other States.

Mr. Thorn: The goldfields people ought to be ashamed of themselves.

Mr. SAMPSON: We have to remember that people in business have to face competition. I do not know whether the statement was an exaggeration, but I was seriously assured that four-fifths of the merchandise for the goldfields is brought across the Trans line. I was told that the cost of transport from Melbourne to Kalgoorlie was less than the cost from Fremantle to Kalgoorlie.

Mr. Latham: The goods have to be handled twice when brought overland.

Mr. SAMPSON: Yes. They have to be handled twice on the way across. The member for Murchison knows that building material is transported by motor truck from the metropolitan area to Wiluna, and this in spite of the fact that we have a train running to Wiluna.

Mr. Ferguson: Beer is conveyed by truck from Merredin to Wiluna.

Mr. SAMPSON: In that instance the alternative would be difficult; it would be necessary to transport it down to Goomalling over the Wongan line and thence to Wiluna. I understand that a large quantity of beer is conveyed by boat to Geraldton and then by train to Wiluna. Reverting to the transport of goods from the Eastern States to Kalgoorlie, I know of my own knowledge that cauliflowers, cabbages, onions, and other vegetables, as well as fruit and merchandise are taken there by rail. We all know it and regret it. Special consideration should be given to this matter. Not only are our railways suffering, but our producers also are suffering. The market we once held is said to be lost to us because of the disinclination of our railways to review their prices. A loaded train costs very little more than one that is partially empty. It would be a good thing if serious consideration were given to this subject, even if those concerned decided to throw overboard old established ideas regarding the transport of goods.

Mr. Thorn: The Commonwealth railways are cutting the rates.

Mr. Wansbrough: They are doing it through rebates.

Mr. SAMPSON: Yes; and they will never see the error of their ways until they face competition. If we continue to allow them to have things their own way we will go from bad to worse. I wish now to refer to the cost of sending away parcels. This is a matter which also affects our railway receipts, and has an effect upon the balancing of the Budget. I have made out a list showing the cost of conveying small parcels over the varying distances, but propose to give only a summary of it. It is cheaper to forward by post a one lb. parcel for all distances over 250 miles; a two lb. parcel over 500 miles; four and five lbs. for all distances over 125 miles; six and seven lbs. over 800 miles; eight lbs. for all distances

over 125 miles; and nine, ten and eleven lbs. for all distances over 200 miles. The same rate is charged for both railage and postage in the case of one lb. parcels up to 30 miles, and over 50 miles to 250; a two lb. parcel over 250 miles up to 800; a three lb. parcel over 800 miles, and a seven lb. parcel over 200 miles to 800. All other weights than these up to 11 lbs. are cheaper by rail. The postal authorities are getting our trade. It is well that the business community should realise that only part of the money expended on sending parcels by post is retained within the State, whereas all the money expended on sending parcels by rail is kept within the State. The postal authorities have a big pull over the railways inasmuch as throughout the metropolitan area they have a series of receiving depots. Every post office is a receiving depot. The gospel of convenience is a widespread one. Those who would, despite the inconvenience, walk from Wellington-street over the horseshoe bridge to Roe-street would not represent a big percentage of the people.

Mr. Hawke: Is not the postal department in this State carried on at a loss?

Mr. SAMPSON: I am not considering that department. Unfortunately the Railway Department is carried on at a big loss.

Mr. Hawke: If the postal department is carried on at a loss, the revenue collected here must be expended here, and more than the revenue.

Mr. SAMPSON: I am not considering that department, but the railway system. I want members and the public to give their trade to the Government railways, but I also want the railways to review some of their charges and be more considerate in respect to weights and distances.

Mr. Wansbrough: Wait until we get a new Commissioner.

Mr. SAMPSON: We can deal with this forthwith. I trust it will be possible to establish at least one receiving depot for the railways at a convenient spot. If one wanted to send a four or five pound parcel to Kellerberrin, it would be cheaper to send it by rail, but to do so a man would require to walk over the horseshoe bridge, down the other side, along Roe-street, despatch the parcel, and walk back again.

Mr. Ferguson: It is cheaper to send it through two departments than one.

Mr. SAMPSON: It may be argued that it is cheaper to send it through the post, and give the railways the percentage they would receive under their contract for the carriage of parcels, than to give it direct to the railways. I should like to see a railway depot established near the ticket-receiving office, and another in some more central position. If we are able to increase the revenue of the railways, the Treasurer would not regard this matter as one of minor importance. I am sure the Government would welcome any step that would ensure the greater utilisation of a system that has been established for the common good.

Progress reported.

*House adjourned at 9.40 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Wednesday, 18th October, 1933.*

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

### BILL—POLICE ACT AMENDMENT.

*Recommittal.*

On motion by Hon. H. Seddon, Bill re-committed for the purpose of further considering Clause 2.

*In Committee.*

Hon. Sir J. W. Kirwan in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 66 of principal Act:

Hon. H. SEDDON: Yesterday there were inserted in paragraph 2C the words "charged or." The effect is that a person who is merely charged will be liable to the penalty provided. That I do not think is the intention of the Chamber. Therefore I move an amendment—

That the words "charged or" be struck out.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I move an amendment—

That the following be added to the clause:—"Paragraphs 2A, 2B, and 2C of this section shall remain in force until the 31st day of October, 1934, and no longer."

I shall not repeat the arguments I used last night. The Bill represents emergency legislation; and if it is fair and equitable that such legislation should come up for review annually, that consideration justly applies to this clause.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I hope the amendment will not be carried. All hon. members must recognise that the depression will not be over by the 31st October next year, but that then it will still be necessary to continue relief work. Such being the case—unless a miracle should happen—the measure must then be in operation. It may be contended that there is no harm in introducing the words, but the discussion of the amendment here and in another place will not be a good advertisement for Western Australia. Any Government in power will be only too glad to recognise the advisableness of repealing such legislation as this so soon as it can be done with safety.

Hon. A. Thomson: Then there is no harm in the amendment.

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

Ayes .. .. .	9
Noes .. .. .	10

Majority against .. .. . 1

#### AYES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. R. G. Moore
Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. E. H. H. Hall	Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. E. H. Harris	(Teller.)