

row, for there are certain figures which I had intended to deal with. However, I may say I fully agree with the remarks of the Premier and those of the member for the district in regard to this Meekatharra field. There is no doubt a very large area of mineral country exists there and a great deal of development work has been done. It is impossible to work these mines, to fully develop these properties, without facilities for doing it as cheaply as possible. And where mining timber is required in such large quantities as is the case in that district it is equally impossible for economic mining to be carried on without these facilities. There is an enormous amount of mineral country still further North. The Peak Hill country is one that made a name for itself years ago, and it is quite possible that with a railway extending further North facilities may be given to the Northern district which will enable the people there to profitably re-open some of the mines that have been closed down. I cordially agree with the Bill. The railway will tend to facilitate the economic development of the mines in that territory, and I am quite satisfied that from the State's point of view it is in every sense warranted. I cordially agree to the Bill, and I hope the House will approve of it and will allow it to become law.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*House adjourned at 11 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

Thursday, 10th December, 1908.

	PAGE
Question: Estate Repurchase, Mt. Erin ...	822
Motion: Agricultural settlers and taxation ...	822
Bills: Vermin Boards, 2a. ...	831
Bunbury Harbour Board, Com. ...	836
Motions: Fremantle Dock, to postpone construction ...	886
Crown Suits Act, 1898 ...	841

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

### QUESTION—ESTATE REPURCHASE, MT. ERIN.

Hon. J. M. DREW asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, What was the price paid by the Government for the purchase of the Mt. Erin Estate? 2, What was the area of the estate? 3, Exclusive of reserves, what quantity of the land remains unsold? 4, What sum will be realised when payment has been completed on all the blocks selected?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, £9,185 0s. 11d. This was the amount paid to the vendor for his interest. In addition an amount (estimated at about £11,000) has to be added to cover balance of purchase money on Conditional Purchase lands, together with a further amount for the 1,676 acres of Crown land added to the subdivision, and also the value of the pastoral lease. 2, 58,911 acres, exclusive of the 1,676 acres of Crown lands, making a total of 60,587 acres. 3, Nil. 4, £28,296 1s. 6d. (including additional areas, par. 1 and 2).

### MOTION—AGRICULTURAL SETTLERS AND TAXATION.

Hon. C. A. PIESSE (South-East) moved:—

*That having in view the need that exists for the further encouragement of the settlement and development of our agricultural lands, legislation should be enacted providing for the exemption from direct State and local taxation of all conditional purchase holders for a period of at least three years from date of selection.*

He said: It is not my intention to take up much of the time of the House in connection with this motion, but I am encouraged to bring it forward by the many sympathetic remarks that fell from various speakers during the debate on the Address-in-Reply at the opening of this session, those sympathetic remarks being applied to the class of people my motion seeks to deal with. I would like at the outset to say that what I mean by direct taxation—I might have used a better expression—is the taxation provided by our statutes under the heading of land and income tax, roads board taxation, wheel tax and the dog tax. Some of these are State taxes and others are of a local nature, but these are the only taxes I look upon as being of a direct nature. Of course the conditional purchase holder whom I seek to relieve also bears a tax in the way of annual instalments, but they are eventually recouped to him when the land becomes his own. I do not wish it to be thought that I am not pleased with the work done by the Lands Department. I think it is excellent work and that the department deserves every credit, but there is one tax the conditional purchase holder pays that has never been provided for by Parliament, and that is the tax of 10s. for the lease of his holding. It is a printed form and I do not suppose the total cost exceeds one shilling. I merely refer to this in passing, because it is one of the pin-pricks that cause annoyance, and this certainly has not been provided by Parliament. I purpose dealing with the new selector after he has overcome the initial difficulties. I do not want to take up the time of the House by giving an account of the way in which he reaches his holding, though undoubtedly the selector does have considerable trouble and has to incur considerable expense. I purpose dealing with him after he has reached his holding and paid his first instalment which entitles him to be there and after he has paid half the survey fees. Then he becomes a marked man, a target for all the direct taxation to which my motion refers. He has probably overcome many of the difficulties and settled down quietly on his land calculating, as they all have to

do, the cost of developing it and how to make every penny go as far as it will go, and realising that he will not get any return for the next 12 months at least, when all at once he receives notice from the district roads board—in many cases even before his land has been surveyed—assessing him at a half-penny rate in the pound.

*Hon. W. Maley:* And the health rate also.

*The Colonial Secretary:* They do not pay health rate over agricultural lands.

*Hon. C. A. PIESSE:* The hon. member may be wrong. I know the Health Act Amendment last year provided for it, and it means a very big burden.

*The Colonial Secretary:* The hon. member cannot name a farming district the Health Act covers other than a township. The provision last year was exactly the same as in the existing Act.

*Hon. C. A. PIESSE:* It is not necessary for me to take up the time of hon. members in drawing up a list of the trials through being on the land, because we have read so much about them in the newspapers that members are as fully conversant with them as I am. But we know that the first twelve months are full of trials and that every penny the selector possesses is needed on his holding. Many members referred to this on the Address-in-Reply and my object in bringing this motion forward is to have further discussion on the matter, so that eventually I trust we may get some relief, and I ask that this relief shall be extended for at least three years. Why should a man who has gone to all this trouble, who has risked so much in taking his family out into the bush—because they are not all single men in these localities, and the most persevering of them are married with big families—become a target for these taxation Acts immediately he has settled on his holding? He pays his ½d. road tax, a wheel tax of 5s. per wheel, 7s. 6d. dog tax, and then we have the Taxation Department firing at him, if he possesses more than 1,000 acres. No man with a large family can do with less than 1,000 acres. At any rate we have the Commissioner of

Taxation firing at these men and altogether they have a lively time.

*The Colonial Secretary*: Are they not exempt under the land taxation?

Hon. C. A. PIESSE : No, you looked out for that. The Commissioner of Taxation has put an entirely different interpretation on the intention I understood the clauses were to have when they passed this House. If hon. members will remember it was stated first of all that provided a man did not have more than 1,000 acres of first-class land, he would be exempt. I fought for the privilege to be extended to the fullest area the Land Act permitted, but after several hours' discussion—time which I must express regret for having taken up—the Colonial Secretary brought forward a proposition that if I would withdraw my amendment he would put it into the form so that a man might hold 2,500 acres of mixed land. I accepted that in good faith, but to-day the Commissioner rules contrary to my belief that a man is exempt who holds 2,000 acres of first-class land and 500 acres of poor land so long as it is mixed. I take it that it was our intention a man should be exempt in such circumstances. At any rate, I know it will be used as an argument against giving further consideration to the selectors. However, the position to-day is that a man with more than 1,000 acres of land has no exemption, and I contend that men with large families cannot do without that area. If I were a trustee of the Agricultural Bank I would not take up a risk unless people held 1,000 acres or more. What we want in this country are men with large families. The single men are all right and probably they can afford to pay a little extra taxation. I encountered a man in the train the other day who said he was driven off his land because the area was too small, but he said that his brothers were remaining on the block until he could go back. A married man cannot do that. He is driven off the land altogether and the Agricultural Bank will not advance to him. If we wish to encourage the settlement of this huge area, the millions of acres we have to dispose of, we must relieve the new settlers of

their taxation for a period of three years. My experience of 27 years in the South-West district has shown me that these settlers get no return for their capital for the first three or four years.

Hon. R. F. Sholl : It would take a lot to drive you away from the land now.

Hon. C. A. PIESSE : Yes, because my sympathies are with these people and because I know that these are the men who enable others like the hon. member to enjoy the fat positions they now enjoy in this State. I love these settlers on the land. I am so often with them in their troubles that when I make an appeal on their behalf it is made in good faith. It must appeal to hon. members that it is most unfair to tax these men. We should give them some little relief, if we cannot give them the full relief as suggested in my motion, for a period of three years. We have no more justification to collect that tax from those men, during the first 12 months at any rate, than we have to try to collect it from the 600 million acres of land that this country has to dispose of. These unfortunate men must have time to get some result from their labours. I have only put before the House a most reasonable request on behalf of the new selectors, and if the House cannot extend relief from this taxation for three years, I hope it will see its way to give such relief as will enable new selectors to secure some return from their land.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan : What would it amount to ?

Hon. C. A. PIESSE : It depends entirely on the area that a man holds. The trouble with these selectors is that they are so ignorant of the conditions which exist, that it costs them a good deal more than the amount of the tax to fill in the returns that are presented to them. There is no doubt about it, that as far as they are concerned, the Act is entirely uncalled for. It causes, in addition to the hardships I have explained, a good deal of discontent among them. I did my best to fight it out when the Bill was before the House. As far as the Act itself is concerned, I can assure hon. members that the Government did not collect income tax last year in every case ; it was

collected only in some instances. I could name many instances where the tax was not collected. There are still many thousands of pounds owing for last year. Why does not the Colonial Secretary explain that to the House, and enable members to see how the money is going to be secured? That is the position to-day. I have no hesitation in saying that there must be other people whose experience is the same as mine in connection with the collection of the income tax. We should not try to hoodwink the people and make them believe that the whole of the income tax was collected last year. We know very well that the Government have not yet been able to check last year's returns, and that a huge sum will yet have to come in. I want to say that we have to be extremely careful when we are inducing people to settle on our lands, and we do not want to make this place the heaviest taxed of all the Australian States.

*Hon. R. F. Sholl*: It is pretty well that now.

*Hon. C. A. PIESSE*: As I have already stated, selectors have numerous taxes to pay already. There is the wheel tax to which I have referred. In New Zealand that is not in existence. I was speaking to a man from that country recently, and he told me that all the taxes he paid amounted to  $\frac{1}{2}$ d., in the pound on the land. There is one thing I know, and that is that this motion of mine, if carried, will necessitate the amendment of numerous Acts, but we might get over that difficulty by simply bringing in a Bill dealing wholly and solely with this question, and give the measure a name something like "A New Selectors—"

*Hon. J. W. Hackett*: Relief Act.

*Hon. W. Kingsmill*: Emanicipation Act.

*Hon. C. A. PIESSE*: "Relief Act," or something like that. It might be called "Relief from Direct Taxation." But a rose would smell as sweet by any other name. That is what could be done; just introduce a simple Bill, which would cover all that I have asked and give relief to these people.

*Hon. J. W. Hackett*: What would the relief amount to?

*Hon. C. A. PIESSE*: The relief would be this, that settlers would be relieved from worry for a period of three years from having to look after pettifogging returns, which cost more than the tax is worth. They would be relieved from that, which would be a very big consideration. I think it is unfair to tax these people. We are trying to legislate on the same lines as Victoria—a cabbage patch—where they have millions of acres against our hundreds of millions of acres, and we are legislating as if we had no land whatever to dispose of. We have disposed of 14 million acres, and we have still a great deal more to dispose of. We could not give the State a better advertisement than to say that for three years the settlers should be exempt from direct taxation. I commend the motion to hon. members, and I feel sure they will give it the consideration that they have always given to motions in the past.

*Hon. W. MALEY* (South-East): I second the motion.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (*Hon. J. D. Connolly*): I really do not think the hon. member can be altogether serious in moving a motion of this kind. I am rather inclined to think that on account of the great love he has for the new selector, that great love has overshadowed his better judgment. Undoubtedly the hon. gentleman deserves every credit for the way in which he looks after the new selector in his district, and, indeed, in the whole of the State. But now, if hon. members will look at the proposal calmly, I do not think it will be doubted that the selectors—and I give way to no one in my good opinion of the pioneer who goes out to open up the country in the way many men have done in this State—and at the present time it is an accepted fact—that the settlers in this country have received exceptionally fair treatment, especially at the hands of this Government. If a selector goes on the land he has not the burdens to bear that some hon. members are led to suppose from listening to Mr. Piesse. Let me put the hon. member right with re-

gard to health rates. In this respect the selector is safeguarded. In no instance is a health board constituted in an agricultural area, and when I say agricultural area, if a town exists within an agricultural area, the Health Act of 1898 applies to the township and the township only; therefore, a farmer or selector has not to bear one penny health rate, as it is the people who are living in the township only who are rated.

*Hon. J. W. Hackett:* I pay myself on C.Ps.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I would be prepared to pay a health rate on a few good C.Ps. in a township, and I would consider myself a very fortunate man indeed.

*Hon. J. W. Hackett:* Orchard blocks are C.Ps.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It would not extend to an orchard.

*Hon. J. W. Hackett:* I beg your pardon, it does.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Not unless it is in a closely settled district, or within the boundaries of a township area. Now, again, in regard to the land tax passed last year, particular care was taken to exempt new selectors from taxation. Hon. members will remember very well that part of Section 11 of the Land Acts of 1907, which says:—

“All lands held under contract for conditional purchase made before or after the commencement of this Act under the Land Act 1898 or any amendment thereof, are exempted from assessment for taxation under this Act for the term of five years . . . such exemptions shall only apply to taxpayers who prove to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that they do not hold legally or equitably more than one thousand acres of cultivable land, or two thousand five hundred acres of grazing land, or of cultivable or grazing land mixed, as defined by the Land Act and its amendments.”

That gives a new selector every chance. I think it is a good argument, showing as it does that the land settlement is increasing month by month, in fact, almost doubling itself in some instances. Taxation on selectors are not heavy

now. The hon. member instances New Zealand, where he says they have no such thing as a wheel tax. Let me tell him though, that in this country hospitals in agricultural areas are maintained out of Consolidated Revenue. Even if we go to the goldfields in this State, we will find that most of the hospitals are maintained partially at the expense of the people, and in the agricultural districts, with a few exceptions, they are maintained entirely at the expense of the State. What do we find in New Zealand? There every land owner has to pay a hospital rate for the maintenance of hospitals; therefore, if you compare, as the hon. member has done, New Zealand with this country, I do not think the comparison can be called a happy one. Then, again, in the amendment passed to the Agricultural Bank Act during the tenure of this Government, it provides that a man who goes on the land with almost no capital can obtain £300 in full. That is to say he can ringbark his selection on contract work and receive £50, if he clears it he can get another £50, and on top of that he can receive another £200.

*Hon. C. A. Piesse:* I absolutely deny that. He does not get anything of the kind.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Those are the provisions. I presume the hon. member holds a different opinion in regard to the valuation. Cattle and sheep are imported and sold to the farmer on long terms. I am not finding fault with the land settlement policy, because the farmer is undoubtedly the backbone of the country, but I wish to say, in justice to what the Government have done, that the new selector is not overburdened in any way. The roads board tax is probably the only tax that the selector is asked to pay. There is the wheel tax, but that is not heavy to the new man. I appreciate the burdens and the hardships that the new selector has to undergo, but I do not think this is a time when the House should be asked to help in any way to relieve the new man of the small portion of taxation which he is asked to pay. I do not rise to a point of order, but I

think there is a doubt as to whether the motion is strictly in order. It says:—

“That having in view the need that exists for further encouragement of the settlement and development of our agricultural lands, legislation should be enacted providing for the exemption from direct State and local taxation of all conditional purchase holders for a period of at least three years from date of selection.”

I do not know if the motion is in order in having been brought on in this House. Anyhow new selectors are not subjected to any great taxation and if the hon. member looks at the matter calmly I am sure he will believe that. He is led away by his great desire to help the new settler, and his great love to encourage land settlement in this country.

Hon C. SOMMERS (Metropolitan): I have listened with great interest to the remarks of Mr. Piesse. As to the land settlement of the State the community owe a great many thanks to the Government. Notwithstanding what Mr. Connolly has said as to the assistance which the Government render in the matter of land settlement, still the Colonial Secretary does not quite seem to gather what Mr. Piesse desires. It has come to my knowledge that the new selector has to pay taxes other than the wheel tax referred to. Take my own case for instance. I selected some land 40 miles from the railway line along the Midland Railway. I had to pay half survey fees and the necessary half year's rent in advance, then another half year's rent, and that land has not yet been surveyed—it is in course of survey now. But immediately the land was granted to me, some time last December, the roads board sent in a notice claiming their rates, and the rate on 2,000 acres came to something like £5. With regard to my neighbour there was some doubt as to which roads board he came under and he got two notices both boards claiming from him, and he was asked to pay £10. Of course the new settler is not able to buy vehicles, therefore the wheel tax does not affect him.

But the man who has to pay right away, a year's rent before the land is actually surveyed and before he knows where his ground is—because he only roughly knows where it is—he cannot go on to the land to work, he is handicapped. These are burdens which the new selector is called upon to bear. When the selector pays half a year's rent on application and pays half survey fees, that should be taken as a guarantee of his bona fides and for the first few years some relief should be given to him as to the rates because there are no roads made in new country. That coming on top of the land rent which he is asked to pay and the heavier burden of the outlay to enable him to get his fencing material, his house building material and his ordinary goods and provisions, makes it very hard indeed for the new settler. I think Mr. Piesse is on the right track when he thinks that some relief should be given to new settlers at the early stages of settlement. I do not know what can be done, but if some relief can be given without unduly harassing the Government it should be given.

Hon. W. MALEY (South-East): I am glad to hear that the Minister appreciates the hardships that settlers have to undergo in going on the land in Western Australia. And if the motion does nothing else I hope it will lead the Government to consider whether it is advisable to make the payment of the rent, not in advance but annually after the first payment. I think the first payment should be made and subsequent payments made annually. After the land has been made use of for 12 months the settler has a chance to pay comparatively small charges and he has some income with which to pay the Government for the land he is in possession of. In regard to an interjection of mine as to the Health Act, I opposed the clause in the amending Bill which this House has just passed, and which states—

“Notwithstanding that such rates were made and levied under the provisions of the Roads Act, 1902.”  
These are the concluding words of

Clause 2 of the validating Bill which was passed the other day, the Bill to validate certain health rates made within certain roads board districts. Although I cannot say off hand that the selectors have been charged health rates, this I do know that agricultural lands have been rated on the capital value and rates have been paid where no services have been rendered. I myself have paid rates, and I am satisfied that the Bill that has been passed through the House will give the roads boards power to levy rates on agricultural lands, on selections, on conditional purchase areas or homestead blocks if the roads board and the health board happen to be composed of the same individuals, that is if the health board is worked through the roads board. The Bill we have passed gives the board full power to claim health rates on conditionally purchased land. If provision had been made in the Bill against the possibility of such a thing it would have been far better and I would not have risen to support my colleague this afternoon. I am opposed to exemptions in taxation because if taxation is good for the country, the individual should contribute his share according to the stake he has in the country, because after all the taxation is for the benefit of the individual in proportion to the interest he holds in the State.

Hon. G. THROSSELL (East): Although I claim to represent one of the chief agricultural centres of the State, and a part of the State where new settlers are going forward, I much regret that I cannot support the motion. We already give our lands away, we lend money for clearing, we provide sheep and stock, and now we are asked to exempt the holders of over 1,000 acres of land, because we exempt already the 1,000-acre man. If this motion is carried we exempt the large land owner. That is the class of man who should not be exempt. I am in daily touch with the farmer when I am in my district, and a very large number of men are pouring into my district to-day, and I have never been approached on a subject such as this.

On the contrary our land regulations are thought to be the most liberal, not only in Australasia, but I claim, throughout the world. Once we affirm this motion we exempt the man holding over 1,000 acres from the wheel tax and at a time like this. The Government are cutting down roads board grants and municipal grants, and it is a very small thing to ask the new man who uses the roads to pay this small tax of 10s. a year for his vehicle. If the motion were affirmed, I am certain it would be of no value. I have heard no clamour for this, and I reiterate what I have said before, we are settling the largest amount of land in Western Australia to-day and instead of complaints there is nothing but praise of our land laws. We are most liberal in every direction in assisting the farmers. Where they clear their lands we make an advance. But I think we could assist the new settler differently. If the Agricultural Bank chose to take up and clear land we would then be in a position to say to the new settler, "We have cleared this land for you and here you can make your home." That would be something worth having. But if a man come to us and uses the Agricultural Bank not to the best advantage, he may fail, whereas with the experience of the department the money could be spent to the best advantage. Instead of a new man coming here and using his judgment he would be able to go on a farm with the best guarantee that the Agricultural Bank money had been spent wisely. This is the sort of assistance I should give to the new man but I am utterly opposed to the motion, although I claim to be the farmer's friend. I may say in passing that hardly a day of my life, when I am at home, goes by without I am sought by new arrivals, from various parts of the world, for advice as to how to deal with the land. The other day I was approached by a syndicate of three young men who had taken up land and they wanted advice as to approaching the Agricultural Bank and how they were to settle. I recognise that Mr. Piesse is earnest in his desire to do all he can for the farmers, but this is not the best way to assist them. My

judgment directs me to actively oppose the motion.

Hon. E. M. CLARKE (South-West): If there is one person I would listen to on farming matters it is Mr. Piesse. At the same time there is this to be said, that if Mr. Piesse realises with his capital how hard it is to make a living on the land, how much more so must it be for a man to go out 60 or 70 miles away with a few shillings possibly in his pocket and go into mixed farming. What does mixed farming mean? I ask any member who has had anything to do with agriculture whether it is not a fact that it is impossible to enter into mixed farming unless one has a lot of money to start with. The man who intends to go in for that style of farming must have funds behind him, or it will be a life time before he succeeds. The land laws of the country are as liberal as they can possibly be, and in fact land is absolutely given away, but things are rather different from what they were years ago. The time was when any farmer could go on the land, get it cleared at a low price, obtain a good block near a railway, put in a crop of hay, and he would clear that season a margin of profit of from £2, £3, or £4 a ton on chaff. With the existing market if a man gets £4 a ton for chaff altogether he is very lucky. My sympathies are out to the farmer every time. Now as to the roads board tax. I am in sympathy with that, for I was a party to place it in the power of the roads boards to have compulsory taxation. I realised that there were districts capable of building and maintaining their own roads, and was of opinion that the rich owners in those districts should contribute to the cost. It may be said that it is inconsistent for me to take the action I am now doing on the question before the House, seeing that I acted as I did with regard to roads boards; but I know so well, being an old pioneer, what it is to go back miles into the country, away from railways and communication, get a road built and culverts made, and when I have made the roads to my property, for the roads board to come in, levy a tax and force me to pay although they do not spend one shilling

of money within miles of my property. Any means by which the Government can give encouragement to the people who have gone out back and established homes there will have my hearty sympathy. I pity the man who has to go out back, and I would sooner work for 5s. a day than attempt to go out there without having money to start with. What was in the mind of Mr. Piesse when he proposed the motion, was to assist those people who have gone out back. He did not refer to the thickly settled districts at all, but to the people who are taking up land and improving it, far away from the established districts. For those people I should make the laws more liberal even than they are to-day. I support the motion with the idea of making the exemptions, referred to therein, applicable to the new settler, who pioneers the country and has to do everything for himself, with no roads board to go near him, except to collect rates for which he receives no *quid pro quo*.

Hon. C. A. PIESSE (In reply): I desire to make a few remarks in reply to the statement by the Colonial Secretary as to the advantages of the Agricultural Bank as applied to the small holder of land. The work of dealing with these settlers is not carried out in anything like the way mentioned by the Minister. In support of this I will cite the case of a strapping young fellow, who was recently induced to come down from the goldfields and take up land. He selected a block of 360 acres in the Wickepin area, and in due course he applied to the Agricultural Bank for assistance. They sent out an officer to inspect the property. The selector applied for a loan of £200, and although his application was approved by the inspector to the full extent, yet the responsible officers of the bank in Perth reduced the amount to £100, and even went so far as altogether to alter the style of the fence, which the selector desired to erect from a wire netting sheep-proof fence to a two or three plain wire fence. In addition to that the acreage desired to be cleared was reduced from 90 acres to 60 acres, and I think the price per acre allowed for clearing was also



reduced. A certain sum of money which was required by the selector for a small dam was refused altogether, and other reductions were made, resulting, as I have said before, in the application for £200 originally asked for, and approved of by the inspector, being reduced to £100. This sum was altogether too small for the purpose of the selector and he has accordingly left the land for the time being. I will not say that the bank acted wrongly in reducing the sum asked for, because it is their duty to look very carefully into the prospects of a property before they make an advance. As far as the man himself was concerned, his chief trouble was that the area he held was altogether too small. Considering the nature of the land he was not really given an opportunity to make a successful effort at establishing himself on the block. The man to whom I refer is merely one of many in like circumstances. I would not for a moment endeavour to run down the country, but I want to tell the truth about the position, and I do not desire to see white slaves along the Great Southern, or in any other, district. The remarks made by the Colonial Secretary were true only so far as the law bearing on the matter was concerned, but they were inaccurate as far as actual practice goes. Mr. Throssell has described himself as a representative of the greatest agricultural district in the State. It may be mentioned that 42 miles from the Great Southern district had to be included in the Avon district, in order to give him some title to the claim. With regard to the settlers he speaks of, however, it must not be forgotten that they are all old established farmers, with their holdings situated between two of the finest markets in Western Australia. There is no doubt about it that in the past sympathy has always been extended to the people in the Northam district, and the usual custom was to say that the Great Southern land was not worth a snap of the fingers. No wonder, therefore, that the Northam district is now peculiarly well situated, having received so great a start on the other agricultural districts of the State, and so much more attention paid to it by the various Governments of the past. In connection with this motion

of mine, however, I am not referring to the old established homesteads in the neighbourhood of railways, for the provision to exempt lands for a period of at least three years from the date of selection, cannot of course apply to them, their holdings having been established for a considerable time. It is the selector who goes out back whom I am referring to. He is the man who should receive assistance, for he is the pioneer of the country and has gone out away beyond the boundaries of the settled districts, and completely out of touch with the railway system; he is the man who is building up the future prosperity of the State, and it is only right that attention should be paid to his wants and every encouragement given him to enable him to settle the country and bring into utilisation lands now unoccupied. The Colonial Secretary, in speaking, also referred to the conditional purchase holdings in the vicinity of townships, and therefore his remarks on that score did not apply to the arguments I adduced in submitting the motion. It is a poor country that has to get revenue at the expense of the pioneer, who goes into the back country to try and settle land. I do not for a moment mean to suggest that the country in Western Australia is so poor that such a course is necessary, but what I say is that the administration is at fault, and that the venue of the taxation is misapplied. I have thought this matter out very carefully, and can speak of it from an impersonal point of view, for really it does not affect me twopence, as the fact of having to pay this tax will not have a very serious effect upon my position. But what I want to do is to endeavour to protect those who are struggling to establish themselves in the back country. I am obliged to Mr. President for having permitted me, during the course of my speeches, to wander perhaps somewhat from the actual wording of the motion, but I have done so with the desire to deal fully with a question which is of the very greatest interest to the future welfare of the State—that is the thorough establishment of the agricultural industry. I intend to ask leave to

withdraw the motion as I do not want to commit members to a division on the question. I know there are many members who are entirely sympathetic with the motion, but who would be unable to support me if the question were taken to a division.

Motion by leave withdrawn.

## BILL—VERMIN BOARDS.

### *Second Reading.*

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. D. Connolly) in moving the second reading said: As its title implies this Bill is one dealing with the vermin pests of the country. Up to a few years ago this State was particularly free from vermin and pests of the description dealt with. Of late years, however, we have had an invasion of rabbits from the Eastern States, and also an increase in the dingoes and wild dogs. The Bill is designed in order to afford proper machinery for dealing with the pests. I want members to realise it is an extremely important matter that we should protect both the pastoral and agricultural lands of the State from these pests. We have in Western Australia some 624 million acres of land. Some of it is, of course, waste land, but we have in freehold and conditional purchase 13½ million acres, in pastoral land 162 million acres, while the balance, 449 million acres, is still reserved. A great quantity of the reserved land is being rapidly taken up under conditional purchase, pastoral and grazing leases. The question of dealing with the pests naturally affects the farmer and the pastoralist alike. Rabbits, for instance, are equally detrimental to the pastoralist as to the farmer. In considering our vast area of land we have also to take into consideration our flocks, because, after all, it is in consideration of our flocks that we introduce this legislation. In respect of land used for other purposes it would not matter much if these pests were to overrun it. We have been making great strides in the increase of both cattle and sheep, but if these pests were allowed to increase, our herds would cease to increase. Up to the end of last year we had some three and a-half mil-

lions of sheep and 800,000 head of cattle, as against 350,000 head of cattle which we had seven years ago. Hon. members will agree that this is a very satisfactory increase; and all things being well we anticipate still bigger increases in the future both in sheep and in cattle. In the past the Government have borne the whole expense in connection with the prevention of increase of these rabbits and pests generally. During late years we have erected some 2,000 miles of rabbit-proof fences at a cost of, roundly, £400,000. In addition to this we have advanced £12,000 for the purchase of wire netting. These fences cost us for upkeep and in annual charges £15,000, while we have to pay another £16,000 in interest and sinking fund on the sum I have mentioned. In other words we are committed to an annual expenditure of something like £35,000 in connection with these fences. That is including the sum we expend on the destruction of dingoes and kangaroos. Up to the present, as I say, the Government have borne the whole burden of this and have erected some 2,000 miles of fence. In addition to this, we have an annual vote for the destruction of wild dogs and kangaroos; and that vote we purpose retaining on the Estimates. Notwithstanding this expenditure rabbits are still likely to come in. They have made their way Northwards and it is more particularly to deal with the pests in that portion of the State that this Bill has been introduced. As I said before, the Government have borne the whole burden and this is a Bill framed in order that we may constitute boards, giving them the power of rating, so that people themselves in future will have to provide to some extent against these pests. I am pleased to see that the pastoralists and farmers welcome this Bill. Indeed it has been partially at their request that the Bill is introduced. It should go without saying that it is regrettable that this Bill was not introduced many years ago. We have similar legislation in the other States, but up to the present we have had no legislation of the kind here. This Bill proposes to constitute vermin districts. The members of the board in

each of these districts will be elected by the ratepayers. Of course it will not be necessary to constitute vermin districts in all portions of the State. Only in such districts where they are found to be necessary will they be constituted. For instance, in districts comprised of unalienated lands in goldfields country it will not be necessary to constitute a vermin district. The constitution of these districts will be mostly confined to the roads board districts. Power is also taken whereby two or more roads board districts can be formed into one vermin district. It will be the policy as far as possible to make the roads boards districts coincide with the vermin districts in order that the administration will be over the same area. Under these circumstances probably the same secretary will be able to look after both, and thereby the cost of administration will be cheapened. It is necessary that these boards should come into force almost immediately. That being so the first boards will be appointed by the Governor-in-Council. They will hold office until the third week in March, the date of the roads board elections, when the members of the boards can be elected by the ratepayers. The qualification for members to sit on these boards is as follows: the candidate must be the owner or part-owner or manager of a holding within the district if such holding is rateable under the Bill. Every person who is an elector under the Roads Act, 1902, will be a qualified voter, provided he has the necessary qualifications under the vermin board measure. The roll used for the roads boards will be used for these elections and persons not qualified under this measure will not be allowed to vote. The qualification for voter is as follows: owner, part-owner, or manager; or leaseholder of an area of 10,000 acres one vote; for over 10,000 acres and up to 100,000 acres two votes; exceeding 100,000 acres three votes. Not more than three votes will be allowed for any one holding.

*Hon. C. Sommers* : That is not in the Bill.

*Hon. R. Laurie* : I would draw the attention of the House to the fact that we have two different copies of this Bill placed in our hands.

*Hon. R. F. Sholl* : I think it is time we got a Parliamentary draftsman.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : The proper Bill is the one that has been amended in Committee.

The PRESIDENT : I will read the authorised copy sent down from the Assembly. Clause 11 states : "every owner, part owner, or manager of a holding within a district, if such holding is rated under this Act, shall be qualified for election as a member of these boards."

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : There was an amendment made in that particular clause and some hon. members must have the original one. However, in Clause 13, the qualifications to a voter are thus set out : those holding 10,000 acres, one vote ; exceeding 10,000 acres but not exceeding 100,000 acres, two votes ; exceeding 100,000 acres, three votes. Then it goes on to say that three votes are the maximum for one holding. It is also provided that a man with three separate holdings may have three separate votes ; and an owner or leaseholder may have votes in separate districts, but not more than three in any one district. The Government inspectors resident in each district shall be *ex officio* members of these boards. There is a similar provision contained in similar Acts in the Eastern States. It will be necessary to have inspectors appointed by the Government to see that this law is administered ; because hon. members will recognise that it would scarcely do to simply constitute these districts and hand them over to the members of the boards without supervision. It is further provided that the board shall have power to erect fences, improve existing fences, and also to take other means if deemed necessary to destroy vermin. The board can also affix wire netting to any fence, whether erected by the board or not, if they consider it desirable to prevent the incursion or migration of these pests. If a fence erected by the board is made use of by an owner, he will be liable to pay 15 per cent. on

the value of the fence sufficient for his purpose; that is to say, if the fence be a rabbit-proof fence, and he only requires a cattle fence, he will have to pay 5 per cent. on the value of the cattle fence, and not on the value of the rabbit fence. The board has power to give notice to owners to destroy vermin on their holdings; and if the owners fail to do this the board has power to carry it out and charge the owner with the cost. An arbitration clause is provided for the settlement of disputes. In regard to rating, these boards are given powers to levy a rate not to exceed 2s. on every hundred acres. It does not follow that the boards will rate up to this maximum in certain districts. They may in the beginning impose only a few pence; but it is necessary to give the board sufficient powers to provide what money may be required.

*Hon. S. Stubbs:* According to the copy of the Bill I have, they can rate up to 4s.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. member may give his own explanation directly. Loans can also be made by the Minister from moneys appropriated for that purpose by Parliament: and it is farther provided that boards in arrears or not carrying out their work may be taken control of by the Minister, when all the powers conferred on the board will be conferred on the Minister. Penalty clauses are provided at the end for offences such as interfering with fences, or leaving gates open. Similar Acts are in force in all the other States. This Bill is largely based on the South Australian and the Queensland Acts, more particularly perhaps on the Queensland Act, which has been in force for a number of years. Now the difference between the Queensland Act and this Bill is in regard to the rating powers. In Queensland the rating is on the stock-carrying capacity of the land.

*Hon. R. F. Sholl:* That is the proper thing to do.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: In Queensland power is given to levy an assessment not exceeding 5s. nor less than 1s. on every 20 head of cattle or every 100 sheep ordinarily depastured in the district, provided that the assessment in

respect of a run held under lease or licence from the Crown shall in no case be upon a less number of stock than a proportion of ten head of cattle or 50 sheep for every square mile of the run. Here the rating is so much per hundred acres. No doubt some members will argue that it would be better to base the rating on the stock-carrying capacity of the land, but it would cause considerable trouble and would certainly involve a great deal of expense to assess the lands of the State upon that basis. Inspectors would have to be sent out all over the State to classify the land and say what its stock-carrying capacity is, and it would be years before we could arrive at a proper valuation. Under the system proposed here there will be no delay in getting the boards into operation. In South Australia the Act operates differently. There the Government have advanced something like £460,000 in connection with the erection of 18,000 miles of fencing. The money is advanced at four per cent. and the capital is to be returned in 20 equal instalments. In South Australia the boards borrow from the Government, as in our case, and rate themselves. In South Australia also the vermin boards consist of four persons and a Government official. Here the number on each board is not specially provided for. It will vary a great deal and in each district the number will be fixed by the Governor-in-Council. I think it will be agreed that more has been done in this State by the Government with regard to assisting pastoralists and farmers in the prevention of the approach of rabbits than has been done in any other State.

*Hon. R. F. Sholl:* But it has all been wasted. It came too late.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I think it is the opinion of the majority of the pastoralists that the pastoralists and farmers should themselves do something to assist in the destruction of vermin. Possibly it would have been better if this Bill had been passed years ago. However it is never too late to mend, and the Government are very anxious to get the measure on the statute book so that the people may have an opportunity of pro-

tecting themselves, if they so desire, from these pests. I move:

*That the Bill be now read a second time.*

Hon. R. F. SHOLL (North): Representing a Northern constituency I welcome a Bill of this kind, but it is a most wretchedly constructed measure and could not have received much thought when being framed. It should have been framed in two parts, one dealing with the agricultural areas and the other dealing with the leasehold lands North of the agricultural areas. The idea of giving power to levy up to 20s. a thousand acres on leasehold land on which the rental is only 10s. a thousand acres is absurd on the face of it. However, we must have the Bill. It will need to be passed, and I do not intend to oppose it, but I hope the Government will give an assurance that it will be amended next years so as to make it more workable. I do not believe in the way the assessments are made. I would much rather have the Queensland system adopted where the rate is levied on the carrying capacity of the country. In these Northern areas we can only select in 20,000-acre blocks, and it stands to reason that much useless country must be included in these 20,000-acre blocks. The best of the country will carry about one sheep to ten acres. Other country further inland will carry only one sheep to 40 or 50 acres. Yet this country is liable to be rated at the same price as the better land closer to civilisation. There is one provision that should be made, and that is with regard to wire-fencing boundaries. If a pastoralist or agriculturist desires to fence out the rabbits and puts up wire fencing there is no provision to make his neighbour pay half the cost. It does not come under the Fencing Act, and it is a matter that should be attended to next session or as early as possible. With regard to the amount of money spent on the rabbit-proof fencing, and speaking more particularly with regard to the Kimberley district, the fences have been responsible for the rabbits running along and extending north to Kimberley so that the work has been absolutely a curse so far as the Kim-

berley district is concerned. The fence was not carried far enough north, and a little extra cost might have prevented the rabbits from extending to the Kimberley country. In fact the fence is like a funnel, which the rabbits run along, travelling hundreds of miles a year northwards.

*Hon. F. Hamersley:* The Government cannot be blamed for that.

Hon. R. F. SHOLL: I know the Government do their best, but their efforts have come too late, and so far as Kimberley is concerned it would have been just as well if the fence had not been erected. I see that there is no provision made for the alternative of imprisonment in the penalties provided. I believe it is provided for in the Justices Act and the Criminal Code, I do not know which, but as these statutes will not be before those administering the Act I maintain that the alternative of imprisonment should be put in this measure so that those administering the Act will have it before them. I do not know that a man who wilfully breaks down a rabbit-proof fence with the object of letting rabbits through will be worth a £50 fine. Nothing will prevent that class of man but the alternative of imprisonment for six months. Pastoralists do not come begging or, as my friend earlier in the day said, pleading; we simply come and ask power to tax ourselves with a view to preventing rabbits from devastating the public estate. The land does not belong to the squatters: it is leasehold land and belongs to the State; and all we ask is a workable Bill, not such a miserable one as this. This needs to be recast, and I hope that will be done at an early date. I hope the Government will give assurance before this Bill is passed that they will amend it and bring down a measure suitable to the different conditions of the people, somewhat on the lines of the Queensland Act, so as to assess on the stock. I should like to see an alternative to assess on the stock or on the country. If a man is not utilising his country then collect the tax on the country, but if a man is stocking his country to the full carrying capacity of the land let it be optional whether he pays on the stock or on the country. The idea of

taxing the area will mean that some of the holders in the Kimberley area will have to pay £4,000 or £5,000 a year if they are taxed up to the limit. It is preposterous.

*Hon. W. Kingsmill:* It means a thousand pounds for a million acres at the limit.

*Hon. R. F. SHOLL:* I do not oppose the Bill. In fact I am going to support it with all its imperfections, because it is absolutely essential that we should have some sort of measure started at once so as to prevent the invasion of rabbits and the destruction of the beautiful pastoral country in the North. I saw a telegram to-day saying that the rabbits have passed by Shark Bay into the Gascoyne district. So it is essential that the pastoralists should have some Bill passed so that they can make a start at once. The Gascoyne settlers are already subscribing money and sending out parties to try to check these rabbits. The pastoralists do not come cap in hand to the Government and ask the Government to do this or do anything, and when they do ask for any assistance the Government are rather chary about helping them. However, I do not wish to delay the House any longer except to say that with all its imperfections I welcome the Bill because I consider it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of the large pastoral areas of the North.

*Hon. E. McLARTY (South-West):* Like my friend I welcome this Bill. The squatters of the North have been looking for such a measure for years past. A great deal of injustice has been done to some squatters. We have had contributions for the destruction of kangaroos in the district, and some of the squatters have contributed pound for pound with the Government subsidy, but other squatters in the district who benefit by the expenditure have refused to contribute. This seems to me to be unfair, and no doubt a Bill of this description is necessary to make the burden universal on those who have the advantage of the expenditure. It seems to me the rating clauses are extraordinary. If I understand it rightly

it is 2s. per hundred acres. Does that apply to pastoral lands?

*The Colonial Secretary:* Yes.

*Hon. E. McLARTY:* Then I would ask any commonsense man how he thinks the pastoralist with perhaps a million or two million acres can pay such a rate as that?

*The Colonial Secretary:* It costs just as much to drive out rabbits from a hundred acres of pastoral land as from a hundred acres of agricultural land.

*Hon. E. McLARTY:* I cannot see how pastoralists could possibly pay that. I would not be prepared to place too much in the hands of a local board. Small holders, it will be found, will seek every opportunity of securing election on the boards, and their sole idea will be to penalise the holders of the larger areas. The holders of large areas are not to be envied as some people imagine. Every possible means have been taken to develop the country to the fullest extent of its resources. During the last few months the company that I am interested in imported a boring machine from America at considerable cost for the purpose of endeavouring to obtain water from thousands of acres, for which we have been paying rent for years past, but from which we have not got a shilling in return. We have gone to enormous expense in putting down bores without any result. I mention this to show that people are obliged to take in big areas that they do not require, simply to get hold of some good land. If this rate of 2s. per hundred acres is imposed, for my part I should say let the rabbits come in; I would sooner do that. It is a preposterous charge to impose. We know in the North that small holdings are of no use, and if we are to have a rate like this levied in addition to our annual rental, I would far sooner let the thing go altogether. I agree with what Mr. Sholl has said with regard to the incursion of rabbits; but it seems to me also that the Government have assisted to let them into the Kimberley districts, and I think the squatters are shortly going to be inundated with this pest. I welcome the Bill, and I have no doubt it will do some good, but I hope when it gets into Committee the fact will

not be lost sight of that this imposition of 2s. on one hundred acres will be a burden that no squatter will be able to bear.

On motion by *Hon. E. M. Clarke* debate adjourned.

## BILL—BUNBURY HARBOUR BOARD.

### *In Committee.*

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

(*Sitting suspended from 6.12 to 7.30 p.m.*)

## MOTION—FREMANTLE DOCK.

### *To postpone construction.*

Debate resumed from the previous day on motion by *Hon. J. W. Kirwan* that further work in connection with the construction of the Fremantle dock be postponed until fresh instructions be received from Parliament.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (*Hon. J. D. Connolly*): I do not intend to delay the House at any length with the remarks I have to make on this motion. The subject is fresh in the minds of most members, as it was only recently that this work was authorised by Parliament; the Bill having been introduced and passed through this House and the other Chamber last session. I am somewhat surprised at the motion, firstly, because it is only quite recently that the Bill was agreed to authorising the construction of the dock, and the Bill was only carried after a very long and very full discussion in both Houses of Parliament. Then, also it has been recognised for some time, indeed for a great number of years, that a dock is essential at our main port, Fremantle. The fact of the port being so isolated I think warrants it having docking accommodation. This was recognised by the then Premier, Sir John Forrest, as far back as 1896, twelve years ago, although at that time the shipping of the port only amounted to 680,000 tons; whereas last year the shipping of the port amounted to 1,154,000 tons. The necessity for the

dock was recognised twelve years ago, when the shipping, as I say, was only about one-third what it is to-day, and the then Government placed in the Loan Bill a sum of £142,000 for this work. The matter has been frequently discussed on all hands since, and the delay was caused not because the people doubted the necessity for a dock, but rather on the question of site. There seemed to be, for a great number of years, a diversity of opinion as to the site for the dock. In 1900 we find that a resolution, which I quoted here last year, was passed by the Assembly. It was—

“That, in the opinion of this House, it is in the best interest of the colony that the construction of a dry dock at Fremantle should be taken in hand immediately.”

So that members see that right through these years from 1896, Parliament has at different times expressed an opinion in favour of a graving dock at Fremantle. First we have in 1896 Sir John Forrest seeing the necessity for a dock and providing a sum of £140,000 in the Loan Bill. Then resolutions have been passed in the Assembly as to the advisability of constructing a dock: every Parliament since the time I have mentioned has affirmed the desirability of the construction of a dock at Fremantle.

*Hon. W. Kingsmill*: And it has been in every Governor's Speech.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: In New Zealand, with a coast line of 1,000 miles, they have no less than four graving docks. It is not so much a question whether this dock will pay directly or not. The first consideration is, what good will it do to the State? Undoubtedly, any ships being chartered for the port of Fremantle will take into consideration whether there is a dock there or not. They must naturally take into account what chances there are for repairs in case the ship gets into difficulties. This will have a big influence on the freights, as I will show later. When the Fremantle harbour was constructed, although it did not pay interest and sinking fund, it had a good effect indeed in reducing freights. In spite of the reduction that has taken place in freight

on account of better harbour facilities, there has been a direct gain of about 6s. a ton in lighterage. Apart from the harbour paying sinking fund and interest the harbour has been a great gain to the consumers of the State by lowering freights on goods that come to Fremantle. So a dock of this kind will have the same effect. A port well equipped with good harbour accommodation and docks must get better freights than those ports that have no such facilities, more particularly when the port is isolated like Fremantle is, 2,000 miles from any other dock. That must weigh considerably with ship owners, I should say. When I introduced the Bill for the construction of a dock, I mentioned that the expenditure was £285,000, and that it was to be extended over four years. The proposition now is to extend the expenditure over a greater number of years, probably five, and possibly six years. In that way the State will not be asked to contribute or find one lump sum in a single year, as payment will be extended over five or six years. It is frequently stated, and I know certain members are of that opinion, that this dock is going to be a great burden on the State. That argument might appear good until we inquired more closely into the matter. Such has not been proved so in other places, and I contend even if the State had to bear the whole of the interest and sinking fund for this dock it would not be any loss or burden to the State, because people would get a direct benefit by cheaper freights on goods brought to the State. The expenditure, as I mentioned before, need not be any burden on the general taxpayer. In the Fremantle Harbour Trust Act there is power to strike a harbour improvement rate, and this harbour improvement rate is not a new feature in harbour trust Acts; it exists in other States. First of all I may say the Fremantle Harbour Trust, under their Act, are charged with the raising of sufficient money to pay interest and sinking fund. When this dock is built it will be vested in the Harbour Trust, and they are charged under their Act to raise sufficient money to pay interest and sinking fund. In moving the second reading of the Bunbury Harbour

Board Bill last evening I stated that it was within the power of the Governor to strike a rate, if the board neglected to do so, therefore the money can be raised in that way.

*Hon. R. D. McKenzie:* Who will find the money?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : I will take the figures, which are not altogether correct, that Mr. Kirwan gave last night, £350,000, and we will assume for the sake of argument that the dock will cost £350,000.

*Hon. J. W. Kirwan:* Sir Whately Eliot's figures.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : It would, of course, be presumption to doubt the estimate of Sir Whately Eliot. I do not question his estimate, but I will show that he has included in that estimate works which are not necessary for the dock, which are not, properly speaking, part and parcel of the dock. It is the same as if a man bought a new suit of clothes ; it is not necessary for him to have an overcoat also, and charge it to the cost of the suit. I will tell members what Sir Whately Eliot says and the cost of the items. Assuming on the figures I gave last year that the tonnage of imports to Fremantle is 600,000 tons—these figures are low, because if members will look at the report of the Fremantle Harbour Trust, laid on the Table recently, they will see that there has been an increase during the past half-year of something like 28,000 tons, and if members will look at the Report they will see that that only applied to general cargo; there are dozens of other things that could be levied on which do not come into the general rate. In calculating on the basis of 600,000 tons, and it is a safe basis indeed, and assuming we divide the total cost into five payments of £70,000 a year, what do we find? In the first year we shall have to find £3,000 for interest and sinking fund, which means a trifle over one penny per ton on the goods landed on the wharves in Fremantle—a penny and one-fifth to be exact. Mr. McKenzie says this is going to be a burden on the people. Now the next year we would have to find another £70,000, which would naturally double the amount of the sinking fund



and interest. £6,000, which would mean twopence and two-fifths. The next year there would be £9,000, and the sixth year there would be £15,000 to be found, and a rate of 6d. per ton charged. This would be  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. on the capital cost, even taking the figures which the member has quoted. In five years time the goods landed on the wharves will be increased, and I think Captain Laurie, who was chairman of the Fremantle Harbour Trust for many years, will agree that there will be a considerable increase in that time, seeing that during the last half-year there has been an increase of over 20,000 tons, therefore the harbour improvement rate will come down.

*Hon. R. D. McKenzie :* The exports will not increase, the imports will.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : The policy of the Harbour Trust and the Government is to do away with outward wharfage altogether, and no outward wharfage, except on timber and gold, is in existence to-day; therefore I am dealing with the wharfage on imports. I think I am taking a very safe basis, the 600,000 tons, and a harbour improvement rate of 6d. will provide £15,000, or  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., being  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. interest and one per cent sinking fund on £350,000. That surely is not putting much of a burden on the people who use the port, even to charge say 6d. a ton on the goods received, sixpence on wine and spirits and on anything else, hardware for instance, which would be worth something like £1,000 per ton.

*Hon. R. Laurie :* There will be additional revenue from the extra number of ships.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : That is so. There will be the harbour and light dues on the extra shipping. These will mount up to a considerable sum, without mentioning cargo at all. I am assuming that the cargo does not increase nor the tonnage of the ships. Every ship that comes in means additional revenue to pilotage and light dues etc. Is it to be a burden on the merchant if he pays even the sixpence which I have mentioned? Probably it will not even amount to as much as sixpence, and is more likely to be about fourpence. The rates then will not

be greater than in any of the other leading ports in the Australian States. It will be less than many. The handling charges are an entirely different matter, being separated from the others and merely for services rendered. There is practically no profit made by them. The harbour improvement charges in Brisbane run from twopence to two shillings, the average charge for harbour improvement at that port being 1s. 1d. In other places also it is much higher than here, and in Sydney it is either 10d. or 10½d. The additional facilities in the port of Fremantle provided by the dock will cause freights to be considerably cheapened, so much so in fact that the extra charges the merchants will have to pay will be made up to them more than tenfold. If the charge at present from England or elsewhere is 27s. 6d. it will be found that this sum will be very greatly decreased by the provision of the better facilities for shipping at Fremantle.

*Hon. R. Laurie :* They have already gone down 5s.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : Why? Because there are better facilities for the shipping. If the merchant gets freight reduced 1s. per ton he is 6d. in pocket after paying the wharfage improvement charge. It is too often said that this work will be a burden on the State, and that this harbour improvement rate will have to be borne only by a certain section of the people. That is not so. The merchants will have to pay it in the first instance, but there is not the slightest doubt they will get it back threefold and perhaps tenfold. The result of the extra charge will be that the interest and sinking fund of the State will not be burdened additionally owing to this work.

*Hon. R. D. McKenzie :* I am afraid that will not work out in practice.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : If the hon. member considers the whole thing calmly he will come to the conclusion that it will work out in practice. Let him consider the gradual improvements of the harbour facilities and he will realise that they are responsible for the fact that freights are much cheaper than they were previously. As Mr. Laurie has said, the charges have already

come down. This has not been brought about by any greater amount of competition in the shipping world, but the reason for it is the improved facilities afforded for shipping at the port.

*Hon. R. D. McKenzie:* I have been under the heel of the shipping ring for so long that it is hard to convince me there will be any improvement.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Whether members voted previously for the dock or not I ask them to consider what I have put before them and not to run away with the idea that the work will be a burden on the State. I know it is fashionable in some quarters to condemn the dock but the work is generally condemned by people who have not studied it. It is fashionable to condemn it on the goldfields, and during a recent election I went through there I had the dock question frequently brought before me. This however did not concern me as I felt I could defend it, and I did so.

*Hon. J. W. Kirwan:* Are there any people in the State, except those at Fremantle, in favour of the dock?

*Hon. F. Connor:* There are a few at Midland Junction.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The dock will be of no more benefit to the people of Fremantle than to those of Perth or even Kalgoorlie, for the latter two places are large consumers of goods and consequently the people there will derive great benefit owing to the cheaper rates resulting from the construction of the dock and the general improvement of the harbour. As to the figures quoted by Mr. Kirwan I want to bring a few facts under his notice. Sir Whately Eliot estimated the cost of the dock at £325,000 but in that estimate he included a caisson to cost £15,000. The object of that is to divide the dock into two parts. This was first put into the plan on the suggestion, I think, of the Harbour Trust, for they considered that as the dock was 550 feet in length it would be better to have a caisson in the centre so that when a smaller ship came in it would not be necessary either to fill or pump out the dock, but that the smaller

portion of it would be able to be used. The cost of filling or emptying the dock however is so small that it is not worth considering, yet in order to get this caisson there was a proposed expenditure of £15,000. The caisson makes no difference to the strength of the dock as it can be taken out when a bigger ship comes in.

*Hon. J. W. Kirwan:* Sir Whately Eliot was against that reduction in the estimate.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is not a reduction. The effect produced by the caisson is just the same as if a temporary partition were put in this chamber so that only one-half of it need be used at a time. It does not interfere with the dock. The strength of the dock is the same without it and by its omission there is a reduction of £15,000. There are other subsidiary works mentioned by Sir Whately Eliot which cannot reasonably be charged against this work. For instance he provides, on the south side of the dock, wharves to cost £10,400. These wharves are not necessary for the dock. During the speech of Mr. Kirwan I interjected to this effect and the hon. member said he would sooner accept Sir Whately Eliot's opinion on the question than mine. I do not question this eminent gentleman's opinion at all but I would point out that these wharves are no portion of the dock. There are on the south side of the dock and will be used the same as the present wharves are. They need not be built until we want more wharfage accommodation and it is not probable that will be needed for many years. Whether the dock is built or not the sum of £10,000 will have to be expended on wharves when they are needed.

*Hon. F. Connor:* In order to open up the river there.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The wharves are not part and parcel of the dock. Certainly they might give the dock a more finished appearance on that side, but if they were built now they would be lying idle. Therefore in that direction there is a saving of £10,400. There is also an item of £11,000 for removing and re-erecting the slipway. This

cannot be charged to capital cost for this reason, that the slipway is there to-day and has been built for some time. It is in a bad state and whether the dock were built or not it would have to be taken away and rebuilt within the next year or two. It could not be left as at present for longer than that period. It has been erected for a considerable time and now it is not in a safe condition. It would have to be taken away in any case before long. The whole of that expenditure therefore would have to be incurred whether the dock was built or not. Therefore there are three items of £15,000, £10,400, and £11,000 which need not be included in the estimate; and that will reduce the total by £36,000, which is no small sum.

*Hon. J. W. Kirwan:* The total is still over £300,000.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Sir Whately Eliot also provides for the concrete work to be considerably thicker than is considered necessary by the Engineer-in-Chief. Probably in this direction also some reduction could be made. I do not say we are likely to depart from Sir Whately Eliot's advice but it must be remembered that he is a man with a very fine reputation and naturally he would be careful to be on the safe side, and in estimating the thickness of the wall or the floor of the dock would make it six inches on the thick side rather than on the thin side. An extra £10,000 to him means nothing and his reputation is at stake. One may depend upon it that whatever his estimate is, it will be on the safe side. It will not surprise me if we get the dock built for the amount estimated by the Engineer-in-Chief. A man of Sir Whately Eliot's reputation will not say the dock can be built with walls four or five feet in thickness if he has any doubt whatever about it. I think it is an extremely bad precedent to say the least of it to bring a motion of this kind before the House. It is a dangerous custom and one which may re-act upon the head of the member using it. If we establish this precedent we shall never know when, after Parliament has carefully considered a work money has been voted for and,

in fact, actually started, an effort will be made by means of a motion of this description to stop it altogether. The same thing might be done in connection with railway proposals and steps might even now be taken to stop further construction of the Norseman, Bolgart, or any other railway. The question of the Fremantle dock has been before the public for the last 12 years. The only reason for the delay which occurred for a number of years was the question of site. It was most complimentary to our Engineer-in-Chief that Sir Whately Eliot has said the site he chose was undoubtedly the best, and better even than the sites much further up the river where it would cost something approaching a million of money to build a dock. When the question of the site was settled the main argument against the dock disappeared. As on the previous occasion when I spoke on this question I have shown to-night that the dock will not be a burden on the State. Machinery is provided whereby the interest and sinking fund will be found without being any burden on those who have to find it and there is more than a probability, a certainty, of gains being obtained in other directions. It also has to be remembered that although the Admiralty have not up to the present agreed to contribute to the cost, their answer was that at present they are not prepared to pay. It does not follow that in future they will not contribute to it.

*Hon. J. W. Kirwan:* That is an argument for delay.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is no argument for delay. There is no reason why they should not contribute after it is built. And the same thing applies to the Commonwealth. That work is going on to-day and the country as expressed through the last Parliament is in favour of it. The work has been started, and let me say again it would be an extremely dangerous precedent to carry a motion of this kind. I trust the House will not agree to it.

On motion by *Hon. F. Connor* debate adjourned.

## MOTION—CROWN SUITS ACT, 1898.

Debate resumed from 3rd December.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. D. Connolly): I had not intended to speak on this motion. I only wish to say that while not agreeing entirely with what has been said by the mover, no doubt some legislation is wanted in that direction. However, I do not think any Government would be prepared to go to the extent mentioned by Mr. Moss: that is, to place the Crown in the same position as a private individual. But whether the motion be carried or not it is not at all likely that a Bill will be introduced for this purpose this session. It would take some time to consider it and the time at the disposal of the Government will not permit it.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 8.3 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Thursday, 10th December, 1908.*

	PAGE
Questions: Law Reports, binding ... ..	841
Phosphates, utilisation ... ..	841
Early Closing Proclamations ... ..	841
Hansard, cost of printing ... ..	842
Bills: Wines, Beer, and Spirit Sale Amendment, report ... ..	842
Land and Income Tax, 2nd, point of order ... ..	842

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

## QUESTION—LAW REPORTS, BINDING.

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Attorney General: 1, Is the Minister aware that the successful tenderer for binding of 450 Law Reports has no plant to execute the work. and, in consequence, has to sublet the contract? 2, In view of the many

promises made to those interested, will the Minister give the reasons why the usual clause against sub-letting was left out of this order? 3, Will the Minister, in order to arrest the rumour in the trade that this work has been sent out of the State, give the name of the factory in which the work is being done in this State? 4, If not, will he give the reason why such secrecy surrounds this contract?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied: 1, No. 2, The binding was only a portion of the order given. The missing parts necessary to make the Law Reports complete constituted the greater portion of the order, and were only obtainable from the Law Book Co. of W.A. (late Bull & Hale). It was therefore in the interests of the Government to include all the work in the one order, instead of treating separately with publishers, printers, and bookbinders. 3, The Law Book Co. of W.A. (late Bull & Hale) assure me that the work is being done in the State, but object to giving the name of the factory or factories. 4, Answered by No. 3.

## QUESTION — PHOSPHATES, UTILISATION.

Mr. HAYWARD asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Will a supply of the newly discovered phosphates be available to enable potato growers to test their value on the crops which will be planted during next month? 2, Also will he arrange that trials may be made at the State Farm, Brunswick.

The HONORARY MINISTER replied: 1, Yes, to a few growers only at present. 2, Arrangements are now being made to conduct trials at the Brunswick and Hamel State farms.

## QUESTION—EARLY CLOSING PROCLAMATIONS.

Mr. BOLTON (for Mr. Angwin) asked the Attorney General: 1, Did the Minister make the proclamations gazetted in 1907 and 1908 under the Early Closing Act, 1902. on the advice of the Crown Law Department? 2, Will the Govern-