

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 20th August, 1929.

	PAGE
Questions: Government Labour Bureau	406
Kangaroo and euro skins, royalty	406
Midland Railway, purchase	406
Land Selection, West of Midland railway	406
Speed boats	407
Railway broad gauge, Kalgoorlie to Perth	407
Leave of absence	407
Bills: Workers' Homes, 3r.	407
Transfer of Land Act Amendment, Com. report	407
Inspection of Scaffolding Act Amendment, 2r.	407
Land Agents, 2r.	409
Industries Assistance Act Continuance, 2r., Com. report	411
Public Buildings, 2r.	413
Divorce Act Amendment, 2r.	415
Agricultural Lands Purchase Act Amendment, 2r.	416
Main Roads Act Amendment, 2r.	416
Stamp Act Amendment, 2r., Com. report	422
Water Boards Act Amendment, 2r., Com. report	422
Reserves, 2r.	424

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

QUESTION—GOVERNMENT LABOUR BUREAU.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Police: 1, Realising the difficulty which confronts those living in the outer suburban and country areas in respect to the cost of travelling to Perth to interview the Government Labour Bureau in their endeavours to secure work, will the Minister advise whether it is possible to arrange for registration and engagement to be made at the nearest police station or other governmental office? 2, If so, will he take action to secure the necessary publicity, and thus lessen the burden upon those desiring Government work?

The MINISTER FOR POLICE replied: 1, Police officers and certain station-masters in outer suburban and country districts act under the authority of the State Labour Bureau in registration and engagement of unemployed. In all the more important country centres Government employees have been specially appointed agents for the bureau. 2, A fair allocation of employment on Government works is made under existing arrangements which are widely known.

QUESTION—KANGAROO AND EURO SKINS, ROYALTY.

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, What is the annual aggregate amount of revenue from royalty on kangaroo and euro skins? 2, What form does the royalty take—so much per skin, or so much per lb., and what amount is imposed as royalty? 3, Is the royalty imposed only upon skins exported or on all skins sold?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, It varies from year to year, and is between £3,000 and £4,500. That derived from "Red" kangaroo skins alone varies from £600 to £1,000. No royalty is charged upon wallaroo (euro) skins. 2, The royalty is charged at per skin, viz., "Reds" twopence per skin; "Greys" from twopence per skin to ninepence per skin, according to district from which they are taken and weight of skin. 3, The royalty is imposed only upon skins sold.

QUESTION—MIDLAND RAILWAY, PURCHASE.

Mr. C. P. WANSBROUGH (for Mr. Ferguson) asked the Premier: In view of the decision of the Government to refuse the request of the Midland Railway Company to be allowed to construct spur lines from the company's railway, and in view of the urgent necessity of the construction of these lines, in the interests of the Midlands districts and the State generally, will he open negotiations with the company for the purchase by the State of the company's line and land concessions?

The PREMIER replied: No.

QUESTION—LAND SELECTION, WEST OF MIDLAND RAILWAY.

Mr. C. P. WANSBROUGH (for Mr. Ferguson) asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Are the Lands Department prepared to receive and grant applications for land between the Midland Railway and the coast, outside the 1½ miles limit from the railway? 2, If so, will he make a public pronouncement to this effect?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, Yes. 2, Notice will appear in this week's "Government Gazette" making such land

available subject to survey, classification and pricing and payment of survey fee in advance.

QUESTION—SPEED BOATS.

Mr. NORTH asked the Premier: 1, Have the Government found it possible to regulate and control the speed boat nuisance? 2, Will any action be taken?

The PREMIER replied: 1 and 2, The matter is receiving attention.

QUESTION—RAILWAY BROAD GAUGE KALGOORLIE TO PERTH.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL (without notice) asked the Minister for Railways: Are the Federal Government paying the cost of the survey of the broad gauge line from Kalgoorlie to Perth?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: Yes. It was agreed at the Railway Conference that the estimate for the construction of the proposed Trans-Continental railway to Perth should be brought up to date, and that the Commonwealth Government should bear the cost.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. North, leave of absence for one month granted to the member for Murray-Wellington (Hon. W. J. George) on the ground of ill health.

BILL—WORKERS' HOMES.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—TRANSFER OF LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

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

BILL—INSPECTION OF SCAFFOLDING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. A. McCallum—South Fremantle) [442] in moving the second reading said: This is a small amendment to the Inspection of

Scaffolding Act. In some respects it makes a material reduction in the fees at present charged, and in one or two other respects will tighten up the control. The main provisions of the Bill deal with fees. The House will remember that the fee was fixed by Parliament. Originally it was suggested that it should be left to regulation, but the House decided to include it in the Act and the amount was fixed at 5s. per cent. The law has been very economically administered. I gave an undertaking to the House at the time that no new department would be created, and that the work would be done in connection with the other labour legislation. The Chief Inspector of Factories has been the administering officer. There are also two full-time inspectors, who are mainly engaged in the metropolis, and throughout the country the administration has been in the hands of the district architects of the Public Works Department. The administration costs have not been heavy. It was not the desire of the Government from the outset that the Act should be a taxing measure, or that any profits should be made out of it. It was merely a measure to protect the lives and limbs of men working on scaffolding. We find that in some instances the present fees are too high, and press heavily, more particularly on the big builders. In the case of the new University, the cost is estimated to run into somewhere about a quarter of a million of money, and the fees under the Act would involve £500. It will not cost anything like that sum to inspect the scaffolding, so that this is a very big sum to place upon that building. Representations have been made to me on two or three occasions by contractors who have suggested a sliding scale. There are also other instances where the present fees have operated harshly, such as in the case of the installation of a lift in a big building. The lift may cost £2,000, but the labour involved in its installation may occupy only a day or two. A bosun's chair is required in connection with the installation of the lift, so that under the Act 5s. per cent. has to be charged on the whole cost, which for two days' work would represent an amount that was altogether out of reason compared with the cost to the department of inspecting a bosun's to the department of the inspection. In such instances the amendment will provide that fees will be charged merely on the cost of

labour and not on the cost of the lift itself.

At times painters, signwriters or electricians erect scaffolding for use on a small job. For instance a signwriter may have work that will run into a couple of pounds. The same may apply to an electrician. For such jobs, under the Act as it is at present, the minimum fee would have to be paid. While it might not be a large amount on the individual job, in the aggregate those charges would amount to a considerable sum by the end of the year. Under the Bill it is proposed to levy a small charge that will be spread over these small jobs all the year round. That will give considerable relief to those who have work that comes within that category. Builders and contractors who waited upon me suggested that a sliding scale should be provided by which fees could be fixed, but did not mention any specific sum. Big jobs necessitate the levying of heavy charges but do not necessarily increase the work of inspectors to a proportionate extent. The Government have adopted the principle involved in a sliding scale, and we propose to levy a fee of 5s. per cent. on work not exceeding £10,000 in value, a fee of 2s. 6d. on every additional £100 up to a value of £50,000 and 1s. per cent. on the cost of a building over and above that amount, with a maximum fee charged on any building of £100. We anticipate that the departmental inspectors can do all the work necessary on big buildings for a fee of £100, and that is the limit the builders and contractors suggested would be fair. I have already pointed out that the fees on the University buildings would cost over £500. It will be obvious that the Government can afford to give relief in this instance, because we find that the fees charged under the Act are far more than the cost of administration and it was never intended to make the Act a medium for taxation. We desire that the income under the Act shall be such as to meet the cost of supervision. In the administration of the Act, one or two defects were discovered and the Bill has been brought forward so that Parliament may have an opportunity to rectify them. They apply particularly to the definition of gear. Under the Act gear is only subject to its provisions if it is used in connection with scaffolding. If gear is used apart from scaffolding, inspectors have no control over it. Hon. members cannot fail to have noticed the gear used in connection with

the construction of high steel structures in the city at present. There are hoists up five and six storeys. The men are hauling huge girders to great heights and other material is being hauled up as well. There is no control whatever over the gear used in connection with that work. Although the lives of men who are working in the vicinity are endangered, there is no provision in the Act whereby the gear can be inspected. We proposed to include that gear and make it subject to inspection. I think that amendment will appeal to the House as both necessary and reasonable. If required I can give members some definite instances that the inspectors have noted, as suggesting the absolute necessity for steps being taken in the direction I have indicated. When the Act was introduced originally it did not provide any limit to the height of scaffolding that would come under the law. At the time I pointed out that South Australia had started with an 8 ft. limit and had subsequently amended the Act by wiping out the limit and making the legislation apply to all scaffolding. It will be remembered, however, that we had to agree to a limit of 8 feet in order to save the Bill, because of the attitude adopted by another place. In practice we have found that our experience has been similar to that of South Australia. Frequently on buildings scaffolding under 8 feet in height is in a worse condition than that in use on larger buildings and the men have to take greater risks.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: By Heavens, do they?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I will be able to give many instances by quoting from the departmental files to show that inspectors have reported from time to time upon what they have seen on various buildings. It has brought home to them the necessity for something being done along the lines suggested. It cannot be denied that the contractors who are operating in a big way are well equipped for work on large jobs. They have suitable scaffolding and good plant. When it comes to the smaller contractors, however, it is common knowledge that they make shift with cases or any old class of timber that may be at hand. I can quote many instances upon which the inspectors have reported in which makeshift scaffolding has been used. Men have had to work under conditions that the inspectors consider unreasonable, because

the men have had to accept undue risks to life and limb. The inspectors have been urging strongly that we should fall in line with the South Australian legislation and amend the Act by having no limit to the height. When that particular amendment is before us in Committee, I shall give definite instances that have come under the notice of inspectors. The Act at present contains no definition of what constitutes a workman. There have been some arguments on buildings as to just who shall be included under that heading, and the Bill seeks to make good the deficiency by providing a definition of a workman. The only other provision included in the Bill deals with foreigners. Inspectors have had occasion recently to report that they have found men working on buildings who could not speak a word of the English language. When they asked questions or pointed out the danger confronting the men in connection with their work, the foreigners could not understand what the inspectors were talking about or give them any information at all. Men working in such conditions not only risk their own lives but endanger the lives of other men on the job. In order to overcome that difficulty, the Bill contains a clause making provision that foreigners working on scaffolding must be able to speak English intelligently so as to be understood by their workmates and to understand them in turn. A similar provision exists in other Acts and we ask for it to be included in the Inspection of Scaffolding Act. It will be obvious to hon. members that in these days when high buildings are being constructed, work on scaffolding is dangerous. I have already pointed out that the main purpose of the Bill is to reduce the fees because they are too high, and the Act as it stands is really a taxing machine.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Could you provide for fixing fees by way of regulation so that if the minimum fixed now proved too much, you could alter the fees again?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: It was at first proposed to fix the fees by regulation, but Parliament objected.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: These fees will be fixed as the limit.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I would not object to making the provision suggested by the hon. member. If it were found in practice that the fees were too high, we could then alter them by way of

regulations and save introducing another amending Bill. It will be remembered that the Upper House insisted upon the fees being fixed in the legislation and that course was also advocated by Opposition members here. The Government had to agree to that proposal and now we find that the fees fixed are too high. I shall be prepared to consider a proposition such as that suggested by the Leader of the Opposition when we reach the Committee stage. The introduction of the Bill demonstrates that the Government merely desire to cover the cost of the administration of the Act, and there is no desire to derive more money than is necessary to cover that cost. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir James Mitchell debate adjourned.

BILL—LAND AGENTS.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (Hon. J. C. Willecock—Geraldton) [4.56] in moving the second reading said: The House will remember that a similar Bill was introduced last year and at the second reading stage it was referred to a select committee with the result that several amendments were suggested. The second reading of the Bill having been agreed to previously, the House considered those amendments in Committee and the recommendations of the select committee were practically adopted. The Bill was then transmitted by Message to the Legislative Council in the usual way, but owing to the delay consequent upon referring it to a select committee, it did not come before members of another place until it was too late to receive proper consideration. In the ordinary course of events, the Joint Standing Orders would apply and the Legislative Council would probably have resumed consideration of the Bill at the stage it had reached in that Chamber. Those Standing Orders, however, provide that the Bill must be taken up again at the next ensuing session. Owing to the fact that this year a special session of Parliament was convened to deal with the Redistribution of Seats Act, it will be seen that the Joint Standing Orders do not permit the Legislative Council to resume the consideration of the Bill as would have been possible had no session

intervened between the time when the Bill was received and when it was taken up again. In order to place the Bill properly before the Legislative Council, the Bill is introduced again formally so that it can be sent on to the Upper House.

Mr. Latham: There are a few alterations that we would like to see made.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: We may be prepared to accept some alterations when we are dealing with the Bill in Committee.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Have you made no alterations in the Bill at all?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: None whatever. The Bill before hon. members now is in exactly the same form as that presented to the Legislative Council last year. I hardly think the House would desire to debate a Bill that was so recently dealt with. Perhaps we could pass the second reading stage, and if hon. members desire to amend it, we could give consideration to those proposals in Committee. But I think it would be a waste of time for me to go into a Bill we all know so well and which went to a select committee last year. The members of that select committee will have a lively recollection of the principles in the Bill. Actually there is very little in the Bill after all, although it does contain some 60 clauses. Its object merely is to control land agents and control and arrange for the registration of land sales.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There were some pretty rotten provisions in the Bill of last year.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: That was before it went to the select committee. After the select committee had dealt with it the House approved of it.

Mr. Latham: I want to see a limitation on the scale of charges provided.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Well, that can be reviewed when we reach the clause in Committee. Still it is hardly necessary for me on the second reading to outline the principles of the Bill, since we remember them so well. In Committee, if necessary, any of the clauses can be reviewed, but I think the second reading speech should be nothing more than a formal motion. I do not want to take up the time of the House in enunciating the principles of

a Bill fully considered so recently. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [5.2]: I can quite understand that the Bill must pass through this House again and go on to another place before it can be considered by another place, since we have had the special session referred to by the Minister. Almost every year we have passed legislation and in the succeeding session have had to make amendments in it. We had an instance of that just now in the Bill to amend the Scaffolding Act, which certainly needs amendment. I should like to ask whether the Minister for Justice has considered this Bill carefully since it was here last year.

The Minister for Justice: Yes, and a select committee of the House considered it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: At the time, yes. But have you considered it since then?

The Minister for Justice: We have had no experience whatever of the legislation since then, and so I have not given it any special consideration.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not propose to delay the second reading, but I think we ought to go through the clauses in Committee again before passing it on to another place. That, of course, cannot be done to-day. We put through a great deal of legislation with a desire to protect people, but for the most part we fail. We make various Acts prescribing how people shall sell their produce, always of course with the intention of doing good, but I am afraid that in the majority of instances we do little more than harm. Ministers ought to be very careful about putting up legislation of this class. However, I do not wish to discuss the Bill on the second reading. If the Minister would agree to take the Committee stage say, to-morrow, I would be content.

The Minister for Justice: Or it can be left over for a week if desired.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Very well; for my part I will allow the second reading to go through.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT CONTINUANCE.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. M. F. Troy—Mt. Magnet) [5.6]: in moving the second reading said: The parent Act was introduced in 1915 for the purpose of rendering assistance to such settlers as were affected by the drought of 1914, and in order to meet the situation as it arose from time to time this measure has been continued from year to year. The present Bill merely asks for an extension of the Act for another year. This legislation has been of very great assistance to settlers, and although there have been complaints regarding the administration from time to time, I think it can be said the Act has been responsible for putting many settlers on their feet, and that such failures as did occur were not entirely the fault of the administration. The assistance offered to the settler under this measure is probably more liberal than that given in any other country of the world. In some respects the settler has not reciprocated as he might have done to encourage Parliament to extend the life of the Act. However, it is still necessary and I do not think the House will refuse the extension.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: To protect the securities, we must pass the Bill.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Still, some day the Act must come to an end. The total advances made under the Act to the 31st March, 1929, have been £12,619,100 18s. 7d. Those figures are truly remarkable. It shows to what extent the settlers have been assisted by the Government. Advances to settlers on the board for the year ended 31st March, 1929, totalled £532,497 1s. 8d. The value of the crop receipts from the 1st December, 1928, to the 31st July, 1929, totalled £326,960.

Mr. Latham: Less than what you advanced.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, much less, but it is estimated that the value of the equity in the 1928-29 pool is £25,000, making the total value of the crop receipts £351,960. The total value of the crop receipts for the whole of the 14 seasons, including equity in the 1928-29 pool, etc., is £12,060,237.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Is that wheat alone?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, for it includes other produce to the value of £13,962. It is practically all wheat. The wheat production of the clients of the board has totalled in that time 45,500,633 bushels.

Mr. Lindsay: That is during 14 years.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: During the term over which the Act has operated. Clearances granted for the 12 months ended 30th June, 1929, were 41; the total clearances since the inception of the Act have been 1,936. The settlers on the board at present are as follows:—Fully assisted 379; partly assisted 55, stopped 466, funded 660, or a total of 1,560. The amount of indebtedness outstanding on the 31st March, 1929, was:—Assisted and stopped settlers £1,021,326; funded under instalment mortgage £689,950. The losses to date, including bad debts and cancelled debts, total £654,550. This includes cancelled debts amounting to £78,226, and bad debts amounting to £363,196, or a total of £441,423. The only settlers on the board now are in the main returned soldiers. It is necessary that the Act should be extended in order to carry on those settlers until they make good.

Mr. Latham: At the rate at which you are going you ought not to have had to ask for a continuance of the Act over next year.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: There are some settlers still requiring assistance. Of course there always are. All the same, I think it desirable that as soon as possible the settlers should be able to work out their own salvation. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [5.12]: We must accept the Bill or the securities will go. Under the Act there is no need to have a mortgage over the crops or the stock, which are secured by the Act itself. Year by year, of course, there is a good number of farmers who complete their payments and are able to go along without further assistance. As the Minister has said, sooner or later the Act must disappear. But for my part I think the Act is just as valuable as the Agricultural Bank Act itself. Because we make no bones about putting on the land men without money, so of course we must stand to them when they need assistance. We have to support them just as we did in 1914, the only time when we really had a drought. So under the Agricultural Bank Act we first advance to them

money to enable them to become possessed of a farm, and then we have to advance further money to carry them along. And it is much more cheaply done under this Act than it could be done under any other system. It has been suggested that the Agricultural Bank Act and this Act should be amalgamated. I do not agree with that. The Agricultural Bank Act is used for the purpose of enabling settlers to make farms, whereas under this Act the advances made are seasonal and we are able to get back from the block the amounts advanced to the farmer to put into the block in order to carry him on over the year. As the Minister has pointed out we have grown some 12½ million pounds worth of produce by the assistance of this Act. By the growing of that £12,000,000 worth of produce we have established a great many farmers on the land, and we have protected Agricultural Bank securities in the only way those securities could be protected. We have adopted the policy of sending people without money on the land. We waited for 80 years for people to come here and grow food for us, but at the end of 80 years we were still buying food from the Eastern States. By taking on men without capital and without experience, too, at the expiration of six years—in 1916—we produced eight times as much wheat as was needed to make flour for our own people. We did that with the aid of men who went on the land without money. But for that Act many of those men naturally would have had to leave their holdings after 1914, when we had a bad season. So the Act has done a power of good not alone to the farmer—the man actually assisted by the Act—but also to the whole of the people of the State. Twelve millions worth of wealth is no small amount for the men we have assisted to produce, and the advantage to the Treasury from the production of that wealth is of course far greater than any possible loss. Under this Act, in the early stages, we paid land rents without consulting the conditional purchase lessees, and a great many of those rents were on blocks that were intended to be forfeited. The result was that we got the rents.

The Minister for Lands: A lot of those people are very much behind in their rents.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am referring to the early stages of 1915. Land rents were paid for a great many people and the land was not forfeited. In those days rents were paid in that way on land on

which the lessee had no intention of settling.

The Minister for Lands: They are paid to an extent now.

Mr. Latham: Land rents are paid by the board now.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, but only on land in occupation. Every account is now a live account, but that was not so in the early stages of the Act. That accounts for some of the losses. I believe that a total amount of something over a million had been paid by the board to the Government up to 1924 by way of land rents and Agricultural Bank interest and to meet various governmental charges, much of which would have been lost but for the fact that the board was established. I am aware that some people desire that the board should come to an end, but I think the farmers who have banked with the board—some of them had considerable credits—have done far better than those who went from the board to other banks. Under the management of the board they were supervised and advised.

The Minister for Lands: And protected.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Well, I say supervised and advised. At one time some of the clients had considerable credits with the board and were very pleased to remain under the board because of the help given them. It suited the country, not because we got some money on which we paid no interest, but because the production was greater where the advice of the inspectors was carried to the farmers. I support the second reading. A similar measure is brought down each year and under it the operations of the board are continued. It is necessary to do that once more.

MR. LATHAM (York) [5.19]: I do not intend to oppose the Bill, which we know is one of the annual measures, but I wish to point out that the figures given by the Minister show that the advances are exceeding the returns. The probability is that investigation is required to ascertain whether the writing down of properties would bring about a better state of affairs for the settlers concerned. Many of the settlers on the board to-day are on a class of country that is most difficult to deal with. Very few of the present clients of the board have first-class holdings. Probably it would give the people on the more difficult land greater

heart to persevere with their work if they had an opportunity to make good in the long run. I commend this aspect to the attention of the Minister. Perhaps the Rural Bank Bill will relieve us of the need for passing a similar measure in future, but until that Bill is brought before us, I shall not make any further comments upon it. I hope the Minister will look into the value of the assets of properties against which there are advances, because the fact that the proceeds are not reaching the amount of the advances is a serious matter. If necessary we should face the loss now and allow the settlers to continue their work with better heart than would otherwise be possible.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. A. McCallum—South Fremantle) [5.24] in moving the second reading said: This is a Bill that might be called a Committee Bill.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You have to tell us all about it.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: It lends itself to discussion on the different clauses rather than on the general principles. At the moment we have a law administered by the Health Department to control public buildings, but it is so vague that it is unsatisfactory to the people who have to do business under it. A highly trained and skilled man is required to pass the plans and specifications for the big buildings such as the theatres and picture shows that have been going up in the metropolis particularly. Yet the work has been under the control of the Health Department who have no architect on their staff. The Act also is so indefinite and wide in its powers that it is unfair to the Principal Architect who, for the last two years, has been administering it. The Health Department have acted on his recommendations, but the powers are so indefinite that the Principal Architect has to sign documents without knowing whether

they are in accord with the views of Parliament or of the Government. On the other hand, the existing legislation is a big handicap to architects and builders who have to submit plans to the department for decision. The responsibilities are not definitely specified and, when drawing plans and specifications, they have nothing in the shape of a definite Act to guide them in the different phases of their work. The Bill will make the powers definite and enable the Principal Architect, who will be the officer charged with its administration, as well as private architects, to know the obligations and requirements of the law.

Mr. Latham: Is it proposed to repeal the powers under the Health Act?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, and they will be exercised by the Works Department under this measure. Western Australia and South Australia are the only two States of the Commonwealth in which public buildings have not to be licensed. In most parts of the world and in the other States an annual license is required for buildings in order that they may be controlled and made to comply with the law. Members will see by the schedule that the fee we propose to charge is only nominal, but it will have the effect of giving the department power to refuse a license if the law is not complied with. A license will not be necessary for religious or educational bodies. As in the case of the Scaffolding Bill, it is not the desire of the Government to make a profit, but the fees are to be sufficient to meet the expenses of administration. With the development that has taken place in recent years, and with the enormous buildings that are being constructed, a highly trained man is required to examine plans and specifications, and there is a good deal of technical matter to be determined. It will readily be admitted that the first concern of Parliament must be the safety of the public. This Bill is mainly copied from the New South Wales Act, which has been in force for approximately 20 years. So early in the history of that State was it found necessary to have legislation of this kind. The fee at present charged under the Health Act is 2s. for every hundred square feet of floor, with a maximum of £5. That has proved to be totally inadequate, because some of the theatres built in the city have cost the department £100 for the examination of their plans and specifications. The

owner of the building has reaped the benefit of the difference at the expense of the taxpayers. We have to keep a staff to examine the plans and specifications, and yet we have been able to charge only £5, whereas the cost to the department in some instances has exceeded £100.

Mr. Sampson: The fees are heavy for country buildings.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Principal Architect has looked into that aspect, and he says that so far as he can ascertain, the fee will not be more than £1. I repeat, that will be the highest fee charged for any country hall.

Mr. Lindsay: But what about agricultural halls?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This measure will be administered in the same way as the Inspection of Scaffolding Act, through the local architect. A man will not be sent from Perth to make the inspection; it will be done by the district officers.

Mr. Latham: What about such places as York, Northam or Bruce Rock.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The district officer visits those towns in the ordinary course of his duties. For example, we have an architect stationed at Bruce Rock, and his district is defined. As he travels through the various towns once a year, he will have the opportunity to inspect or investigate under this measure in the same way as he now does under the Inspection of Scaffolding Act.

Mr. Sampson: The Bill looks like a money-making stunt.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Government are financially handicapped in the city to the extent I have stated, and at the present time it is a money-losing stunt, one which the taxpayers have to put up with for the benefit of the proprietors of those buildings. Is it reasonable that private persons should be benefited by taxpayers' money to that extent? The Government are not looking to make money out of the Bill. They merely ask that expenses should be covered. Up to the present the taxpayers have had to carry the burden for the benefit of the owners of these public buildings.

Mr. Lindsay: Do not the inspectors already inspect public buildings?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes; but, as I have explained, the powers at present are so absolutely undefined and vague that the position is most unsatisfactory. In

the case of plans and specifications such as those for the large theatres recently erected in Perth, the architects do not know what their limits are. Such plans and specifications are submitted to the Principal Architect, and he has such wide discretion that he can impose practically any conditions. The position is unsatisfactory from the Principal Architect's point of view, and also from that of the private architects. Therefore the Government are asking Parliament to set up standard conditions for public safety. What one man may consider a standard of safety, others may not regard as such.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is a question of strength of materials.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes. There have been some strenuous arguments between the Principal Architect and private architects as to what really is required. A great deal of controversy has taken place. The Bill provides control for the purposes of public safety over the design of buildings, the strength of columns, the loading of floors and walls, and the means of mechanical ventilation. Vast, complicated electrical appliances have been installed recently, and these will have to be passed. There will also be control over wall structures, escape passages, stairways and so forth. I do not think it can be denied that such supervision is necessary for public safety. All the Bill asks in this respect is that a definite control shall be set up. The Bill further sets out that all existing buildings must be made to comply with its provisions. There is no occasion to anticipate, however, that requisitions will be issued immediately for such buildings to comply with the Act if at present they do not come up to the standard here proposed; but provision is made for the Minister to issue a temporary license for the use of the building pending its being brought up to standard. Hon. members will recollect that when the Licensing Act Amendment Act was passed a similar provision was inserted, setting up a standard for hotels, which were allowed a period to alter their structure so as to bring it up to standard. The matter is far more important where people congregate in hundreds or even thousands, as in picture shows and theatres. Obviously, control is far more important there. I suppose that for every 10 persons who go into a hotel at one time, 100 go into these places.

Mr. Panton: More.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Control is more essential here than in the case of licensed premises. The theatres and halls that have been erected during the past two years or so will comply with the standard proposed by the Bill, having been brought up to that standard through the control of the Principal Architect. Up to within the past couple of years there has been practically no control, owing to the vagueness of the existing Act. The work was done by men who had not the training and knowledge necessary for dealing with such buildings. In the schedule halls are grouped according to the use for which they are designed, and also according to the number of people they will accommodate. License fees are fixed on that basis. I do not think it can be contended that any of these fees are high. The fees for licensing are really nominal, just covering cost. Western Australia and South Australia are the only Australian States that do not issue these licenses. In most other parts of the world buildings of the kind are licensed. The Bill is one that lends itself to discussion in Committee. Practically each clause demands explanation separately. The case is really one of arguing out the various provisions as we go along. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Sampson, debate adjourned.

BILL—DIVORCE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (Hon. J. C. Willecock—Geraldton) [5.40] in moving the second reading said: This is a small measure which proposes two distinct amendments in the existing Act.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is a very big subject, and you had better let us know all about the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I shall do so. I did not know the hon. member was so keenly interested in it. At present, where the man is the person who has committed the matrimonial offence which leads to divorce, the judge may make an order for alimony. That applies also to divorce for desertion or other cause. The judge then makes an order for alimony against the man. Now, the existing Act contains a provision that if the circum-

stances of the man change and he becomes much worse off than he was at the time the order was made, that order may be revised; that is to say, reduced. It is reduced to correspond with the man's altered pecuniary circumstances. On the other hand, it may be that a man who was not in good financial circumstances at the time the divorce was granted and the order for alimony made—the sharer of his joys and sorrows being granted a miserable pound a week—experiences a considerable change for the better. In that state of things it is not competent for the court to revise the order by increasing the alimony. The Bill proposes to confer the necessary power on the court. Under it the judge will have power to grant a larger amount of alimony.

Mr. Latham: It means that changes of domicile will result.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No.

Mr. Latham: I think so.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: That is a matter for another amendment, but even if the Bill should have that effect—

Mr. Latham: Men will evade the liability by changing their domiciles.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: If a man who has a definite legal obligation in this State desires to change his domicile, security may be required from him that he will continue to honour that obligation in the event of his leaving Western Australia. The change proposed represents what is now the law in the United Kingdom. I consider the change necessary in the interests of persons who have suffered because of the defect in the existing law.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Is it not the law now?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No. If a man's financial circumstances worsen, he can apply to the court for reduction of the amount of alimony ordered, but if his circumstances better even considerably, the wife cannot at present apply to the court to have her alimony increased. At present there is no power for a court to grant an increase.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is a man-made law.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, and it differs from the law existing in Great Britain. I do not think hon. members will have much objection to a simulating our law to the British law in that respect. The second provision is that if a

husband who has deserted his wife for five years—which is the statutory time for desertion as a ground for divorce—has in the interim left the State, he will be deemed to be domiciled in the State for the purposes of the divorce proceedings. The judges of the Supreme Court have commented upon this section, and whilst they have granted divorces they consider that the law is not very explicit. Now we propose to make the position perfectly clear. As the law stands a woman may obtain a divorce because her husband has left her, but there is some doubt as to whether the divorce is strictly legal. Once a man has left the State it is doubtful whether the courts of Western Australia have any jurisdiction, whether he can properly be sued for divorce. A woman may have lived the whole of her life in Western Australia but because her husband is domiciled in another part of the world she is not able to secure relief unless she goes to that country to prove that he has deserted her. The proposal now is that the deserting husband shall retain his Western Australian domicile notwithstanding that he may have left the State.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Have you in mind any particular case?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No, but the judges have commented on this section and in order to make the matter quite clear it is proposed to amend the Act in the direction I have suggested. The Act was introduced by a private member and would have been drafted in the way it is now sought to be amended had the Parliamentary draftsman dealt with it in the first place. I do not think the Bill will meet with any opposition in this House. I move—

That the Bill now be read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Davy debate adjourned.

BILL—AGRICULTURAL LANDS PURCHASE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 15th August.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [5.30]: This is a somewhat unusual proposal which is limited to group settlers who are on re-purchased estates. It is in-

tended that the properties shall be granted as homestead farms to certain group settlers. I have looked through the report of the Valuation Board carefully and I noticed that they deal with this subject. I think they say they included the land at cost in the amount they have set against each holding. The Minister has explained that the Group Settlement Board consider this should be done. That being the case they would reduce the capitalisation by the amount charged for the land. I do not intend to offer any objection to the Bill but before going into committee we should have an opportunity to look at the report to make sure that we are carrying out the wishes of the board.

The Minister for Lands: I discussed the matter with the Board.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I wish you would look at the final paragraph. In any case there is no need to go on with the Bill this afternoon, and deferring it for 24 hours will not make any difference.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—MAIN ROADS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 15th August.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [5.53]: This Bill as it applies to local authorities is very complicated and difficult. The House should be careful before passing it into law. The proposal does more than deal with main roads that are affected by the Federal grant. The Main Roads Act covers all roads built by the State in conjunction with the Commonwealth and from State funds alone. It is an important measure and we should study it carefully, otherwise we may pile upon the local authorities a load that will be difficult for them to carry, not altogether in the way of contributions or share of cost of making roads, but also in connection with the maintenance of roads.

The Minister for Railways: That is what they have found out.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: A road may be badly made and the upkeep may be far heavier than the interest on the amount spent in the construction. We all wish for

better roads, but we know there is a limit beyond which we cannot go, and when we impose a burden on a local authority we know that they must carry it. There was a time when landowners maintained roads, but those were the days of slow moving traffic and it was not so difficult then to maintain roads as is the case to-day. At the present time there are 45,000 motor vehicles being used on our roads and the position has entirely changed. More than one half of the motor vehicles are owned in the city of Perth and they go far afield, some even to the north-west, many to Geraldton and many to Albany. Many are constantly on the road well away from the metropolitan area sometimes doing work of State-wide influence, but very often doing work of no importance at all.

The Minister for Railways: There are some Interstate cars knocking around, too.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Than God there are some people coming over with their cars to settle in this State! I would not mind maintaining the roads for them because they become good citizens. There is no Western Australian who has not held out the hand of welcome to the man from the East; it is the man from the East who does not want more from the East. It is a fact, however, that the whole situation in regard to roads has changed. Whereas it was possible in years gone by for the local authorities to maintain roads at very little cost, they can no longer do that. Take the Wandering district which is a good way from Perth. The local authorities there were able to maintain their roads, but at the present time there is a great deal of traffic through the Wandering territory and very little indeed of it belongs to the district. Can we expect the Wandering authorities to maintain their roads? We must be careful that we do not attempt the impossible when we ask the local authorities to pay. We must leave with the road boards sufficient of the tax collected to maintain feeder roads—we call them developmental roads, roads not used by the general public, but which lead to railway sidings. I do not know whether in the case of a river bridge or crossing, the local authority would be responsible for maintenance.

The Minister for Works: The custom for many years has been for the department to build bridges, and the local authorities to maintain them.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Bridges in the past have largely been the responsibility of the Government.

The Minister for Works: No. The Government have built them and the local authorities have maintained them. That has been the position for many years.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Government have maintained them during the early stages.

The Minister for Works: When it comes to a question of reconstruction, the Government do the work.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes. Under the Bill the reconstruction work, would, so far as I can see, be done by the local authorities. The Minister or the Main Roads Board could, and no doubt would require that the local authorities should maintain the roads. Because of that we must be careful. We know that we receive from the Commonwealth £1 and that we add 15s. to every pound. The resources of the State cannot be compared with those of the Commonwealth. Our 15s. is borrowed, and one-half of the responsibility is carried by the local authorities. Many protests have been made against the method of applying the portion of the interest bill that belongs to the local authorities. As time goes on the protests will become louder, and the bill to be footed by the local authority will become greater. Each year we are spending on roads about £680,000 including our own contributions. The Minister said that this year we shall spend £1,250,000. Apparently four-sevenths of this will come from the Federal Government, and three-sevenths will be provided by the State and will have to be borrowed. In view of the decision of the Loan Council it may be difficult for the Treasurer to find the money during the current year. So far as main roads are concerned the position may be all right, but developmental roads and other classes of roads will become a responsibility for the local authorities. Every time we amend the Act we increase the control exercised by the Main Roads Board over local authorities. Every time we pass an Act requiring payments to be made, we should be very definite. There must be no lack of understanding in the matter. The Minister says some points require to be cleared up. In clearing them up we do not want to impose further burdens upon people. The Minister

said he had consulted the local authorities before introducing this new method of contribution towards the cost of road construction. I think he said they had agreed to change over.

Mr. Lindsay: The executive agreed.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: He said the representatives of the local authorities had agreed to the change-over. I am not able to determine which method would be more advantageous to the local authorities. I can understand that if the present arrangement benefits the Main Roads Board, it would be of a disadvantage to the local authorities. We want them to have a better deal than they have had in the past. We are not entitled to perpetuate any injustice. I have received a letter from the Town Clerk of Northam asking me to state that the Minister was misinformed when he suggested that the local authorities had agreed to the change-over.

The Minister for Works: I said their executive had agreed, and I have a letter saying that they agreed unanimously.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I know what the Minister said, but the local authorities are not all in accord.

The Minister for Works: I was not optimistic enough to think they were.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister said they were unanimous.

The Minister for Works: I said the executive were unanimous.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I have been asked to see that some consideration is given to the matter before the Bill is passed. It would be better, even if we had the money to spend on road construction that the work done by the Government should be made a responsibility of the people of the State, and that it should not be charged up to only a few of them.

The Minister for Works: Some people never use the main roads.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That may be so, and some are taxpayers in the country districts.

The Minister for Works: All this work is done in the country, and many people in the city do not go to the country.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Many people in the country travel very little and hardly ever use the roads, and yet they pay an enormous amount for the right to travel over them. In the old days when there was very little traffic the situation was tolerated. To-day the position is different. We have

no right to impose burdens upon landowners throughout the country. They are already heavy enough. They will have to pay what is fair, but it is not fair to ask them to maintain main roads. It would be better that the Government should not only construct roads, but maintain them. The work in connection with main roads is largely experimental. No one knows quite how to build roads that, coming within our ability to pay for them, will stand modern traffic. We cannot afford to do as is done in the United States, lay down thousands of miles of concrete roads. We are still experimenting. We know that certain roads are not standing up to the work as well as we expected. In some cases earth roads are proving satisfactory, and in other cases gravel roads are unsatisfactory. If we are to get the mileage that will afford conveniences to our scattered population, we cannot lay down roads costing £7,000 or £8,000 a mile. We have to do the best we can and spread the money over tremendous distances. Maintenance is an important part of the work, so important that the Main Roads Board have given consideration to the machinery they use for maintenance. Men are now engaged looking after lengths of road and keeping them fit for traffic. That is necessary if a road is to last for some time without further expenditure on repairs. What is to happen with local authorities, whose resources are limited, if they are called upon to maintain roads built in the way I have suggested? The whole matter needs investigation. The Federal Government have treated us well. They have given us a larger proportion of the grant than we are entitled to on our population. At the same time they have collected a petrol tax to cover those contributions. The petrol tax, I understand, exceeded the £2,000,000 per annum grant for roads last year by £300,000. Our conditions are different. We have to borrow our share of the money we spend, and we have an annual interest bill that is mounting up every year. This bill has to be paid by the people who have to maintain the roads. If we take the maintenance over 20 years—the pound contributed by the Commonwealth and the 15s. paid by the State—we will find that the State is paying far more than the Commonwealth. It is impossible for the country people to contribute the money required. In the city there is a small mileage

of road to a large population. In the country districts there are many miles of roads but comparatively few people. The Bill ought to be referred to a select committee, and I hope the Minister will agree to that course being taken. I fear that otherwise we shall drift into a still greater tangle. We have done much to improve our roads by spending a great deal of money, and I hardly think we could have done better. So far, we are only pioneering. I could point to expenditure that ought not to have been incurred, but I believe it was partly due to the Federal system. I have made inquiries, and learned that in certain cases we could not get the Federal grant unless we had the work done in the Commonwealth way. This has led to a certain amount of waste of Federal money. Grades in a road do not matter so much in these days of motor vehicles. It will be easy to drift into a tangle out of which it may be difficult to find a way. I have read that the Minister is in favour of applying a petrol tax in lieu of license fees. That would be a fairer basis. If we imposed a petrol tax on top of the Federal tax, and at the same time charged license fees, I do not know where we should land ourselves.

The Minister for Works: The idea was that the tax should take the place of the license fees.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: At the present time we have a Federal petrol tax plus a license fee. The license fees amount to £250,000 a year, which represents a further tax upon the people of the State.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I have not much more to say. Prior to the tea adjournment, I was pointing out that license fees and other imposts in connection with the motor business total about £250,000 a year. The Minister reminded me that the license fees for drivers are collected by the Police Department. The point is that these fees tax the people and absorb money that might otherwise be used to provide employment. I do not think we really realise the disadvantages of taxation, no matter how or where it is applied. It may be that motors are taxed because they are regarded as a luxury, but the fact remains that the impost is a tax and accounts for money that could better be used in some other

direction. So it is with hospital collections and other payments of a similar description. They all are in the nature of taxation and affect trade. Of that there can be no doubt. Regarding the motor business, there is the tax to which I have referred in addition to running costs. I believe it costs as much to buy all the motor cars in use, together with the necessary tyres, petrol and accessories as it takes to run our railways. Although motor cars are used for the purpose of doing a great deal of useful work, it cannot be argued that the motors do anything like the work that is accomplished by our railways. It would surprise most people to know that there is invested in motor cars more than half the money we have spent upon the provision of our railways and rolling stock.

Mr. Panton: And nearly all the money spent on motor cars goes out of the country.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes. It is doubtful whether Australia will be able to manufacture motor cars for a long time, because our population is so small that we cannot expect to manufacture a variety of cars in competition with the rest of the world. The position is that the Minister desires to have the Bill passed. When such legislation is introduced, it is to a certain extent experimental and will require amendment from time to time. The Minister has indicated that he desires to prevent members of Parliament from attending deputations that wait on members of the Main Roads Board. I agree with that, but I would remind him that members of Parliament have a perfect right to approach the board, and that right should not be taken away from them any more than it is taken away from them with regard to the Commissioner of Railways. The Minister reminded us that the Main Roads Board act under the provisions of a statute and are concerned with the Minister only when it is necessary to get his approval for the expenditure of more than £1,000 upon a contract. I have before me a long list of contracts hardly one of which reaches £1,000, and in connection with all of which the departmental estimate has been considerably above that of the successful tenderer. I hope the Minister will agree to refer the Bill to a select committee. The deliberations before that body need not take long and would give the motor people an opportunity to be heard. Then, again, I would like to know if the Minister intends to appoint a third member

of the Main Roads Board, as required by the Act, owing to the unfortunate death of Mr. Anketell. Since his death the work has been carried on by two members only.

Mr. Sleeman: We have only a splinter of a board left now! The real board has gone.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Mr. Tindale is a good engineer and Mr. Dibdin, I suppose, is good in his branch of the work. I think the third member should be appointed. I cannot see how one senior engineer can possibly overlook all the work that is going on throughout the State. I hope the Minister will agree to the select committee, and if he will say so, it will probably save a good deal of time at the second reading stage.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [7.35]: I agree that the Main Roads Board have done, and are doing good work. The money that they spend in connection with roads is provided by the Commonwealth and State Governments from expenditure under Acts relating to this work. There is no doubt that the productivity of the Commonwealth as a whole has been largely increased by what has been done in connection with our main roads. In Western Australia we have good cause to thank the Main Roads Board because of the operations carried out so far. There are phases in connection with the financial side of the Bill now before the House that should receive careful consideration and in some instances should not have the support of hon. members. For instance, there is a provision under which the Minister proposes to take 25 per cent. of the gross amount received by the local boards from traffic fees. That money is to be paid into a trust fund and is to be used for the purpose of construction and maintenance of main roads. The determination of what is a main road may easily provoke much controversy. According to the Act, a main road is one that has been proclaimed as such, has been taken over by the board, and work on which is to be done at the expense of the Main Roads Board. That is very satisfactory so far as those districts are concerned through which a main road passes. There are districts that have major roads running through them, and I believe those roads can fairly be regarded as main roads. Examples can be given of road board districts that, despite

the fact that they will be called upon to pay 25 per cent. of the gross proceeds from their traffic license fees, will nevertheless receive no direct benefit from expenditure by the Main Roads Board because there is no main road proclaimed as such in their district. In such instances it can easily be understood that there will be dissatisfaction. The Darling Range Road Board district may be cited. There is one road through the district that has been classed by the Main Roads Board as a developmental road. That road is but one of several that lead into the ranges. There is another road that might also be regarded as a main road, but neither it nor the other road I have referred to specifically is so regarded. The position is unsatisfactory from the standpoint that local authorities will be called upon to pay out to the Government each month a sum representing 25 per cent. of the traffic fees received during that period. It is significant to note the astuteness and business acumen of the Government in deciding that returns are to be made monthly. There is no generous consideration in the direction of permitting the local authorities to retain the use of that money for any period; it has to be paid over forthwith. If time and circumstances justified it, I could draw a contrast between the attitude of the Government in respect of monthly payments where the Government are to be the recipients of the amount paid, and that adopted when the Government receive money and sometimes retain it for much longer than a month before paying it over. From the standpoint of consideration to the local authorities, in whose district there is no declared main road, the incidence of the Bill will prove disastrous, or at least will be productive of much anxiety. A local authority with a limited revenue, when called upon to pay over 25 per cent. of their license fees, will be placed in such a position that both minor and major roads throughout the districts will have to suffer considerably. There are places where so-called main roads do not confer any direct benefit upon the districts through which they are constructed. While it may be said that everyone uses main roads at times, it can be said with equal truth that the main responsibility of local authorities is to provide feeder roads to the railways and to main developmental roads. The

latter type of roads having been constructed by the Main Roads board, maintenance must be carried out solely by the local authorities, and no consideration is to be given to those bodies with regard to their traffic fees. It would require a good deal of careful analysis to decide the real distinction between developmental and main roads. Take as an example the Welshpool-road that leads off from what is regarded as a main road to the hills, across the railway line at Kalamunda and on ultimately to join the York-road at Mundaring. I submit it could be argued that that road is a main road and should receive some consideration in respect of the funds that the Main Roads Board will receive from the local authorities to the extent of 25 per cent. of their gross traffic fees. Again, there is the collection of fees from motor charabancs that run into the city on a route initiated in the country. The charge of 30s. per seat becomes a payment due to the Main Roads Board through the Traffic Department.

The Minister for Works: The Main Roads Board do not get a penny of it; it goes back to the local authorities, every sixpence of it, except the cost of collection.

Mr. SAMPSON: If the local authority is not in the metropolitan area, it receives no portion of that amount at all. The whole of the charge of 30s. per seat goes to the traffic pool and is distributed by the Minister throughout the metropolitan area.

The Minister for Works: You said just now it went to the Main Roads Board.

Mr. SAMPSON: And that notwithstanding that the route originates in a district outside the metropolitan area.

The Minister for Works: How can you say at which end the route originates?

Mr. SAMPSON: Of course it originates in the country and comes to Perth, and returns again to its point of origin.

The Minister for Works: Oh, does it?

Mr. SAMPSON: The Minister may say that if Perth were not in existence there would be no charabancs running over these routes.

The Minister for Works: Well you would hardly run a charabanc from Kalamunda.

Mr. SAMPSON: If people desired to travel from Kalamunda to Karragullen and across to Armadale, the charabancs would run. The point is that this charge of 30s. per seat is payable to the metropolitan traffic

pool, and although the route originates outside the metropolitan area, not one penny of the amount is returned outside the metropolitan area. I suppose that nine-tenths of the distance, and in many cases more than that, lies outside the metropolitan area.

The Minister for Works: There is not one route, nine-tenths of the distance of which lies outside the metropolitan area.

Mr. SAMPSON: Take the motor charabanc running from Bruce Rock to Perth.

The Minister for Works: There is none.

Mr. SAMPSON: Well if a charabanc were running over that route.

The Minister for Works: The Minister would not agree to it.

Mr. SAMPSON: But surely the Minister would not object to a charabanc running along that route on days when the train does not run. I could scarcely understand the Minister refusing such a request, if it were to be made. I am sure he would take a reasonable and proper view of such a request. I say again that the local authorities, particularly where there is no main road running through their district, cannot afford to pay over no less than 25 per cent. of the traffic fees collected. If a main road did run through their district, they would have the advantage of using that road without the payment of any additional sum of money. It is anomalous that, where there is no main road, the amount payable to the Main Road Board fund should be the same as if the district were traversed by a main road running through its full extent. So I say this measure requires further consideration. In the absence of such consideration the road boards are being treated differentially, and the problem of road maintenance is beyond their power. I hope that in Committee an amendment will be accepted which will give consideration to those boards that have not a main road running through their districts, but have to find 25 per cent. of the traffic fees.

Mr. LINDSAY: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and negatived.

MR. LINDSAY (Toodyay) [7.50]: I did not wish to speak on the Bill to-night, because my throat is too bad. Moreover, I have not had sufficient time to secure the necessary information to deal with this subject as I should do.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: On a point of explanation. May I suggest to the Minister that he allow the debate to be adjourned rather than force the hon. member to speak upon the Bill now?

The Minister for Works: Well, I wanted to see some progress made.

(On motion by Mr. C. P. Wansbrough, debate adjourned.)

BILL—STAMP ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 15th August.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [7.52]: I do not propose to offer any objection to the Bill. We have from year to year passed a Bill continuing the Act, but the time is coming when we shall have to consider the amount of taxation imposed under our various laws and to reduce taxation very considerably in some directions. This, possibly, is not one of the directions that will benefit the community generally, but it throws an additional burden upon those who sell or buy freehold property. We have considered such a Bill year after year for many years past, and I suppose we shall continue to do so for some years to come, unless indeed the financial position of the State improves considerably. So I do not propose to offer any objection to the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

BILL—WATER BOARDS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 15th August.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [7.57]: This is one of the so-called small measures brought down by my friend, the Minister for Agricultural Water Supplies. I do not know anyone else who has introduced quite so many small measures dealing with important matters, measures

that require very careful examination at the hands of members, and nearly all of which are very far-reaching in their effects, particularly in respect of taxation. There is something novel in this proposal of the hon. gentleman, and I commend the Bill to the earnest consideration of the Premier. If he can get all his Ministers to alter their legislation to agree with this proposal, then whenever he feels he is likely to have a deficit he can hark back over the year, or even over several years, and increase rates and taxes all round. Under this Bill, notwithstanding that under the Water Boards Act the limit of taxation is a rate of one shilling, if a rate of 2s. in the pound has been struck for the year, a further rate, a supplementary rate, may be struck on some subsequent date. And not necessarily shall it be a date in the same year. For instance, if the rate for 1930 is found in 1935 to have been insufficient, the rate in 1930 and in each of the succeeding years may in 1935 be increased over the whole of the years where the revenue has been insufficient to meet all the Minister's requirements.

Mr. Latham: It can date back to 1928.

The Minister for Agricultural Water Supplies: That is not so; you have not read the Bill.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is the usual reply we get from the Minister. He always says, "You have not read the Bill." Then generally he adds, "I am going to have it." He has provided that this Bill shall be retrospective. He says the water boards are to have power—and he himself in some cases is the water board—to date back the additional assessments to the 1st November, 1928. Did someone put in those words without the Minister's knowledge?

The Minister for Agricultural Water Supplies: They were put in under my instructions.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Then the Minister could not have understood the meaning of the words if he says they have not retrospective effect.

The Minister for Agricultural Water Supplies: I say they have retrospective effect.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister now withdraws the statement that the Act would not be made retrospective.

The Minister for Agricultural Water Supplies: You said that if the rate this year was not sufficient after striking a sup-

plemental rate, the board in 1931 could make up the deficiency for this year.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes.

The Minister for Agricultural Water Supplies: That is not so.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I assert that it is so. Why has the Minister provided that the amendment of the section shall have effect from the 1st day of November, 1928, if he only wishes to provide tax for the present year?

The Minister for Agricultural Water Supplies: You introduced similar legislation in 1920.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister's retort, in effect, is that you did likewise. That is what the school girl said. It is a satisfactory answer when the Minister follows a good example, but it is highly unsatisfactory to have it go out to the public that we did something not quite right and in a limited way. The Minister says that we imposed a tax of a halfpenny or something of the kind and now he will make it a shilling.

Mr. Sampson: No, 3s.

The Minister for Agricultural Water Supplies: You did it repeatedly, so we have precedent for the principle.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I should be very sorry if any precedent could be found for the legislation introduced by the Minister.

The Minister for Agricultural Water Supplies: I will give you a whole list later on.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I dare say the list will be edifying but it will not be accurate, of course, or anything like accurate.

Mr. Panton: That is unfair.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Just imagine asking the House to agree that if water boards—the Minister, in some cases—fail to impose taxation that satisfies the needs of the department, he may have the right to impose a further tax, always within the limit of 2s. I cannot understand the House if it agrees to such a proposal, and I hope it will not agree to make the legislation retrospective. Taxation is becoming a serious burden on the people. I suppose it has always been a burden, but it is now heavier than ever before because we are doing additional work. I repeat that these taxes destroy employment and trade, cripple industry and result in harm rather than

good. We can pay far too much for a whistle, even when it is a fairly good whistle, and I am afraid that if the Minister has his way with the water boards, we shall be paying too much.

Mr. Sampson: It destroys the last vestige of faith in the present Government.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We shall be paying too much for services rendered. Doubtless Ministers have already made up their minds what they are going to do if they get an opportunity. Meanwhile we are not going to pass this Bill if I can prevent it. I hope members, particularly those from the country, will oppose it. The member for Albany should oppose it and the member for Fremantle should object to taxation being increased by water boards in the way now suggested. The Minister proposes that the tax paid since 1928 shall be increased as he desires. It would be entirely wrong for the House to agree to such a proposal.

MR. LATHAM (York) [8.5]: I intend to oppose this small Bill. The Minister said it was designed to ratify something that had been done at Wagin. If that is so, the proper thing to do was to bring in a Bill to ratify that particular act, and not put such a blot as this on the statute-book. It is one of the most atrocious things I have ever read. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that if a rate were struck in 1935, it could be made retrospective to the 1st day of November, 1928. We should not agree to legislation of that kind.

The Minister for Agricultural Water Supplies: Do you suggest that legislation should be introduced to exercise a similar provision from the Land Drainage Act and the Road Districts Act?

Mr. LATHAM: I am not responsible for any legislation that might have been passed before I became a member of the House. I shall never approve of any legislation having retrospective effect because it is wrong in principle. If money were required to make good interest and sinking fund on work under construction, let the Minister do as is done by the Works Department—charge it up against the work. That has been the usual practice and I do not see why road boards or water boards should be allowed to adopt another method. The concluding paragraph of Clause 2 is absolutely awful, and I hope it will not become law in its present form. The Minister was

very ill-advised to introduce legislation of this kind. I shall oppose it and all other legislation having retrospective effect.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	24
Noes	..	..	..	..	13

Majority for	11
--------------	----	----	----	----

Ayes.

Mr. Chesson	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Clydesdale	Mr. McCallum
Mr. Collier	Mr. Millington
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Munste
Mr. Cowan	Mr. Panton
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Rowe
Miss Holman	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Kenneally	Mr. Troy
Mr. Kennedy	Mr. A. Wansbrough
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Lamond	Mr. Withers
Mr. Lutey	Mr. Wilson

(Teller.)

Noes.

Mr. Angelo	Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Brown	Mr. Richardson
Mr. Davy	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Latham	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Lindsay	Mr. C. P. Wansbrough
Mr. Maley	Mr. North
Mr. Mann	

(Teller.)

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Panton in the Chair; the Minister for Agricultural Water Supplies in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—Agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 93:

Mr. LATHAM: I move an amendment—

That the words "Such amendment of the said section shall have effect from the 1st day of November, 1928," be struck out.

If the amendment be accepted the Minister will have all the power he requires to strike a supplemental rate, and the retrospective effect of the clause will be cut out.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	13
Noes	..	..	..	..	24

Majority against	11
------------------	----	----	----

Ayes.

Mr. Angelo	Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Brown	Mr. Richardson
Mr. Davy	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Latham	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Lindsay	Mr. C. P. Wansbrough
Mr. Maley	Mr. North
Mr. Mann	(Teller.)

Noes.

Mr. Chesson	Mr. Lutey
Mr. Clydesdale	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Collier	Mr. McCallum
Mr. Corboy	Mr. Millington
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Munste
Mr. Cowan	Mr. Rowe
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Sleeman
Miss Holman	Mr. Troy
Mr. Kenneally	Mr. A. Wansbrough
Mr. Kennedy	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Lamond	Mr. Withers
	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Mr. LATHAM: May I move an amendment in the last line, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. CHAIRMAN: No. The hon. member may not go back.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

BILL—RESERVES.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. M. F. Troy—Mt. Magnet) [8.19] in moving the second reading said: This is the usual measure brought down every session, dealing mainly with portions of class "A" reserves, which reserves cannot be interfered with except by consent of Parliament. I have here lithos. dealing with the reserves in question, and I shall lay those lithos on the Table for the information of hon. members. It is not necessary for me to occupy much time, as the measure is one that can better be dealt with in Committee. It consists of various clauses dealing with requests from local bodies for certain powers. The Wyndham Road Board have had great difficulty in locating a suitable site for a cemetery. Various sites have been tried, but either on account of the rocky nature of the ground or distance from the town involving heavy cost of burials, those sites have

proved unsuitable. The board have now selected portion of what is known as Cambridge Park, which is a class "A" reserve for park lands and recreation. This reserve is bordered red on litho No. 1, the portion which has been selected for a cemetery site being coloured blue. The position is so acute that the board have expressed a wish to be relieved of their responsibilities for further burials if they cannot get this site. Departmental officers have no objection to the granting of the site, but as it is a class "A" reserve Parliamentary sanction is necessary. The Narembeen Greater Sports Ground Association have requested that the present school site at Narembeen, bordered red on litho No. 2, be granted to the association in exchange for other land, bordered blue on the litho, with the exception of the portion coloured green, which it is desired to retain for teachers' quarters. The association have agreed to remove the school at present existing on the reserve and re-erect it to the satisfaction of the Government on the site bordered blue, the removal and re-erection to be free of cost to the Government. The Education Department have agreed to the proposal provided no expense is involved. The present school site was donated to the Government by Messrs Connolly and Hale, who have agreed to this exchange, which is evidently in the interests of the district, as the present site is on one of the low-lying portions of the town. The small reserve coloured red on litho No. 3 is at Inglewood, and has been set apart as a class "A" reserve for recreation. The Perth Road Board desire this ground to be set apart exclusively for a children's playground, and wish that adults be prohibited from entering the area. That has been agreed to, and Parliament is asked to give effect to the decision. For 20 years the site coloured blue on litho No. 4 has been used by the Southern Cross Road Board for a pound. The board have only lately realised that this is part of a class "A" reserve set apart for recreation. The board have to impound a great many stray cattle, and the removal of the pound would cause expense. Accordingly it is asked that the area of the pound be excised from the reserve. The Crown grant of Mandiga lot 24 is held by trustees in trust for the purpose of an agricultural hall site. It is desired to transfer the area to

the Mount Marshall Road Board, but as the trustees have no power to surrender the grant, it is necessary that Parliamentary authority be obtained for the surrender of the trust, so that the land may be vested in the Mt. Marshall Road Board, to which proposal the trustees have agreed. For some time the Claremont Road Board have been endeavouring to create a reserve over a large area of picturesque country at Swanbourne, portion of which is highly suitable for recreation purposes; an oval has been erected on it. The boundaries of the proposed reserve are bordered blue on litho. No. 6. Some time ago the Treasury granted a loan to the board for the purpose of purchasing the area coloured green, which is low-lying and not suitable for residential purposes. This land will be surrendered to the Crown, and included in reserve A7804. The Treasury now desire repayment of the loan, but the board are unable to make repayment; and it is proposed to grant the area coloured yellow to the board with power to sell, so that they may refund to the Treasury the amount of the loan. It is anticipated that if this land is subdivided and made available for sale, there will be a fairly good demand for it. As this is portion of class "A" reserve No. A7804, Parliamentary sanction is necessary for its excision, and for its grant to the board with power to sell. The area coloured brown is also portion of reserve A7804, and it is desired that this area shall be granted to the Education Endowment Trustees in exchange for portions held by them, as marked "C" and "J" on the litho., the former being required for inclusion in the recreation ground, and the latter for the widening of the street which would eventually provide an approach to this land. The inclusion in the reserve of the sanitary site north of Hensman-street cannot of course, be carried out until the question of the removal of these sites has been decided. That is all there is in the Bill, and I shall lay the lithos. on the Table. As the measure affects districts represented by various hon. members, I shall be glad of their support for the passage of the measure. I move —

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir James Mitchell, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.25 p.m.