

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 8th December, 1921.

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

MOTION—IRISH AGREEMENT, CONGRATULATIONS.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [4.33]: Members will have heard with the greatest of satisfaction the news that at length the negotiations between Great Britain and Ireland have resulted in an agreement being arrived at. The news will be received not only with intense satisfaction but with a feeling of great relief, because the question has been a long standing one, affecting not only England but threatening friendships even in a far-distant land such as Western Australia. The House will agree with me, I am sure, that the whole of the people of the Empire should rejoice that a settlement has been reached, a settlement which I hope will be lasting and will lead to the same cordial relations which have always prevailed between Australia and the Empire existing in future between Ireland and the Empire. I move—

That the Legislative Assembly of Western Australia expresses its profound gratification at the settlement of the long-standing differences between Great Britain and Ireland, and its confident hope that the agreement arrived at will inaugurate a period of enduring amity amongst all the dominions of the Empire; and that a cablegram be forwarded by the Government to Mr. Lloyd George warmly congratulating him and all the participants in the recent conference on the successful termination of their long and difficult negotiations.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [4.35]: It affords me very great pleasure to support the motion. I do not know of anything which has evoked greater satisfaction in Western Australia since the signing of the armistice than the news that an agreement had been reached in connec-

tion with the negotiations which have been so long drawn out between Great Britain and Ireland. I trust that now this agreement has been arrived at, all sections of the community will realise that at last we are one great and united Empire, and will work hand in hand for its prosperity. I can only add that those particularly who have come from the old world feel proud that a grievance which has existed for so long has at last been completely wiped out.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [4.37]: I, too, support the motion with pleasure. Having been in the Old Country and known of some of the difficulties and the menace which these were to the Empire as a whole, I appreciate the significance of the settlement and rejoice at the knowledge that the Empire is now united. At last we have a peace which has not been known for very many years. I trust that it will be a lasting peace and that the Irish people, with the responsibilities which are now placed upon them, will energetically undertake the development of their country which, along the banks of the Shannon and in other parts, I am given to understand, contains land than which there is none more fertile in the Northern Hemisphere. I trust that with this lasting peace, prosperity will attend that country.

(Question put and passed.)

QUESTION—ESPLANADE FAIR GROUNDS.

Mrs. COWAN asked the Premier: 1. Is it correct that the portion of the foreshore known as "Carnival Square" has been leased to a private citizen named Mr. Martin? 2. If it is the Government's policy to lease part of the Esplanade, why were no tenders publicly called for? 3. For what length of time has the lease been granted, and at what weekly or other rental? 4. Is it a fact that Mr. Martin, as sole lessee, can use the ground to organise and run any entertainment, should he so desire, for his own personal profit? 5. Is it the Premier's intention to lay all the papers in connection with this matter on the Table of the House? 6. Did he authorise the lease, seeing that his department has the authority to deal with all public reserves and gardens?

The PREMIER replied: 1. No. The grounds have been rented to the Ugly Men's Association and Silver Chain League for their fixtures, and for the balance of the summer to Mr. Martin. 2. A number of offers were received and considered during the year past, but owing to impossible demands by the applicants fell through. 3. Till the end of next summer at a rental from time to time, and for three further terms at increased rates, if occupied. 4. As tenant he may conduct any entertainment which the law allows. 5. Yes. 6. The arrangement was made by the State Gardens Board for the purpose of obtaining

revenue which is used to improve the fore-shore. The improvements already made have proved of great convenience to the public.

QUESTION—STATE SMELTER RECEIPTS IN SUSPENSE.

Mr. CORBOY asked the Premier: 1, With reference to the statement in the Auditor General's 31st Report that £96,951 4s. 11d. is lying to the credit of the Trust Fund at the Treasury, under the heading of "State smelter, receipts in suspense," will he state whether this money is wholly, and, if not, to what amount, the proceeds of the sale of ore products from Ravensthorpe? 2, If it is the proceeds of such sales, does it not represent money which legitimately belongs to the ore producers? 3, With reference to the interest, £1,148 18s. 2d., transferred to the credit of Consolidated Revenue Fund, should this amount not have been paid to the ore producers whose ore has been sold on their behalf by the Government? 4, Why has the amount of £96,951 4s. 11d. not been shown under Government Property Sales Fund?

The PREMIER replied: 1, This amount represents a portion only of the total proceeds of sale on ore products. 2, No. The amount in question represents moneys advanced to ore producers on ores brought to the Smelter and expenditure incurred in working expenses. 3, This amount represents interest on advances and working expenditure on certain campaigns. 4, This account is kept for the purpose of providing funds for advances to producers and working expenses, and transferred from time to time as occasion requires. When matters are finalised the balance will be transferred to the Government Property Sales Fund.

QUESTION—JETTY RECEIPTS, BUSSELTON.

Mr. PICKERING asked the Premier: What is the total amount of revenue derived from all sources of business passing over the Bussellon jetty for the period of the last six months?

The PREMIER replied: £2,161. This represents the earnings of the Railway Department for the six months ended 30th November, 1921.

QUESTION—RAILWAYS, SANDSTONE TRAIN.

Mr. TROY asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Was an extra engine to bank the Sandstone train from Magnet to Sandstone sent from Geraldton to Magnet on Friday, the 18th November? 2, Was the engine required and utilised for the journey to Sandstone? 3, If not, what was the total cost incurred in taking the engine from Geraldton to Magnet and returning it to that base? 4, If the engine was not utilised, who was responsible for the order authorising the

running of the engine, and what is the department's intention regarding the blunder?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Railways) replied: 1, Yes. To be utilised if required, in view of anticipated loading. 2, The engine was required and hauled a load both ways between Geraldton and Yalgoo, but not between Magnet and Sandstone. The reason it was taken on from Yalgoo to Magnet was in order to bank the train from Magnet to Sandstone, for which a load of 127 tons of live stock was specially available; which together with coach, brakevan, and water tank, would give a load of 178 tons. In addition to this tonnage it was expected that general goods totalling between 100 and 200 tons would be offered as had been the case in the two previous trips, which would exceed the load of a single engine. However, only 52 tons of goods were ultimately available, and a bank engine was therefore unnecessary. 3, See No. 2. 4, The running of the engine is not regarded as a blunder.

MOTION—STANDING ORDERS SUSPENSION.

Close of Session.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [4.47]: I move—

That for the remainder of the session the Standing Orders be suspended so far as to enable Bills to be passed through all their stages in one day, and messages from the Legislative Council to be taken into consideration on the day on which they are received; also, so far as to admit of the reporting and adopting of the resolutions of the Committee of Supply and Ways and Means on the day on which they shall have passed those Committees.

It is usual at this stage of the session to suspend the Standing Orders. Of course I do not propose to take any undue advantage of the suspension; but it will allow us to put through Bills without delay and will enable us to deal expeditiously with messages from the Council.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Why have a shoal of Bills in the last days of the session?

The PREMIER: We always do have them. It is merely a number of small Bills which we shall have.

Mr. O'Loughlen: That is all right. What about the Trading Concerns Bill?

The PREMIER: I have not mentioned any Trading Concerns Bill. I spoke to the Leader of the Opposition before giving notice of this motion, and told him the House should have full opportunity for discussing it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [4.48]: I hope the House will not agree to the motion. Last night notice was given of one important Bill, and there may be many others to be brought down at the tail end of the session. It is true that a

motion of this sort is usually passed during the concluding days of the session; but it is first understood that there shall be introduced no further legislation of a controversial character, that whatever further legislation is to come down will be exclusively small Bills, as for instance Bills for the closing of certain roads. It has never been the practice to first suspend the Standing Orders and then introduce legislation of a vital, controversial character. Once the Standing Orders are suspended, the Government will be able to bludgeon almost anything through the House.

The Premier: You know that is never done.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Does that apply to the Licensing Bill?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes, it applies to every Bill the Government may bring down. We have already received a hint that there is to be introduced legislation which will alter an important system successfully carried out for many years past. In view of this, hon. members ought to be wary about passing a motion for the suspension of the Standing Orders. Take the Licensing Bill: No more controversial subject than that of licensing has ever been debated in this Chamber. In that Bill I cannot find a single clause with which I agree.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The Title is all right.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is a highly controversial measure. It has always been the practice to bring down such a Bill at the beginning of the session, so as to give hon. members opportunity for carefully weighing its provisions and even submitting them to their electors. Having regard to the size of the State and to the fact that the Bill was introduced only last week, I ask will it be possible, with the Standing Orders suspended for electors to express their views on the Bill?

Mr. Davies: Has it not been the practice to move such a motion as this at the end of the session?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes, but it has been the practice to first introduce all controversial legislation. We must have consideration for the views of our electors, and we should be given time to consult them on any piece of vital legislation. How will this be possible once the Standing Orders have been suspended? We shall have to treat our electors with scant courtesy, say to them, "We want to close down at Xmas. Hang you!" That is the position. Under ordinary circumstances I should have supported the Premier in this motion; but the circumstances are by no means ordinary. Members on this side, 18 in number, constituting the largest party in the House, know nothing whatever about the Loan Estimates. We have not been told whether the Government intend to carry on a public works policy or to close down the department.

Mr. Pickering: They are going to build the Esperance railway.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: We do not know that.

Hon. T. Walker: They are a mighty long time about it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The hon. member must be in the confidence of the Government.

Mr. Pickering: Yes. They are going to build the Margaret River railway also.

Mr. J. Thomson: And the Como tramway.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am not justified in voting for the suspension of the Standing Orders if I believe that by doing so I shall be inflicting injury on any part of the State.

The Premier: You know that you will not be doing anybody an injury.

Mr. Pickering: Have you no confidence in the Premier?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Of course I have. The Premier is as good a man as any other in the House. But that is not to say he is infallible. He makes errors, like the rest of us. He is making an error in asking us to pass this motion. It is too early for such a motion. If the Premier were to bring this down three weeks hence—

The Minister for Works: Why not six weeks?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: He would be able in the meantime, to place on the Table the whole of his cards.

Mr. Pickering: Would you do it?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes.

Hon. T. Walker: It has always been done.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The practice has been for the Premier to take the Notice Paper, consult with the Leader of the Opposition, tell him what business he intends to go on with, and then cross out all that is to be dropped. I am safe in saying that the Premier has not told the Leader of the Opposition which Bills he intends to drop, or informed him of the legislation he intends to bring down before the session closes. This has always been done before asking the House to suspend the Standing Orders, and hon. members have then been made aware of the legislation it was intended to deal with. Of course, a small measure or two of no importance might be introduced at the close of the session, but it is not customary to bring down Bills of a controversial nature. In addition to the Licensing Bill which already appears on the Notice Paper, we were informed last night that the Government intend to submit a Bill for the purpose of permitting the sale of the trading concerns without Parliament being consulted. I ask members, therefore, whether in these circumstances we should permit the Government to suspend the Standing Orders. The motion goes even further than to give the Government the right to suspend the Standing Orders in connection with Bills; permission is sought to suspend the Standing Orders to permit of adopting resolutions of the Committee of Supply and Ways and Means. In this way there will be nothing to prevent the Government pushing through in one sitting, if they so desire, the whole of the Loan Estimates or anything else that they may wish to bring forward. The House could

meet this afternoon and the Loan Estimates for the expenditure of three or four million could be put through without members having a proper opportunity to consider them.

The Premier: No such thing.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It has been done before. The Premier is pretending to be very innocent this afternoon. I have seen in this Chamber—and not in the time of the Labour Government either—an hon. member put up to move, more than once, that the question be now put.

Hon. T. Walker: It was done in 1910.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Certainly it has not been done during the last four or five years because during that time the conditions have not been normal and the Government have not had any serious opposition. The party sitting opposite the Government realised the difficulties the Government had to contend with, and parties sank, for the time being, their political differences for the purpose of assisting the Government out of the difficulties which were acting detrimentally to the best interests of the State.

Mr. Davies: That is clever.

Hon. T. Walker: It is true.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: We have had this admission from the Premier himself. The hon. gentleman has thanked the Opposition for the courtesy and assistance extended to him in the conduct of the work of the session. As a matter of fact we have been condemned for doing this by a section of the Press, a section which claims to be Nationalists and to be in opposition to the Labour Party.

Mr. Davies: But you have been applauded by the public?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No, we have been applauded by the Premier. The public have been led to believe that we who are in opposition have no interests in the State, but that we are out for party all the time.

The Minister for Works: The Press have reformed now.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is about time now that we took determined action in the direction of bringing back the country into something like a solvent state, and to enable us to do that it is necessary that we should have sufficient time for the purpose of looking carefully into every financial question that is brought before the Chamber. We should have time to take careful note and weigh over and inspect everything that is proposed. We are justified therefore in asking the Premier to postpone the submission of the motion for three weeks.

Mr. Harrison: That would bring us into the holidays.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That will make no difference whatever. I would like hon. members to look at the Notice Paper.

Mr. Harrison: We have had more business on it in previous years at this period of the session.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: On pages 359 and 360 there are two columns of amendments proposed to one Bill. The same thing may

apply to another Bill. Take the Licensing Bill and any other which the Government may bring down. A similar list of amendments may yet be drafted by hon. members, and in addition, members are likely to be asked to consider amendments made by the Legislative Council to other Bills. If the motion is passed we shall receive messages from the Legislative Council, and on merely hearing them read we shall be expected to understand their purport. Amendments made in this manner should always appear on the Notice Paper when members would have an opportunity to peruse them. I trust members will vote against the motion. The Premier, not satisfied to suspend the Standing Orders in relation to Bills, has gone further, and desires to suspend them in so far as they relate to Committee of Supply and Ways and Means. The matter is serious, taking into consideration the position which faces us. I regret that the people of the State do not study the position, shall I say as closely as they did in 1914, 1915, and 1916. If they did so I feel confident that any member who would vote for the suspension of the Standing Orders at the present time would be censured by the electors. There is some reason and some explanation why the electors do not take the same interest now as then.

The Premier: This motion is moved every session.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Never to apply to the Loan Estimates.

The Premier: This does not cover the Loan Estimates.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Does the Premier ever remember a case of Loan Estimates being introduced after the suspension of the Standing Orders?

The Premier: Yes.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: When?

The Premier: I cannot call to mind the year.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I never heard of such a thing.

The Premier: In any case, this motion does not refer to Loan Estimates.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It refers to all Estimates. The Appropriation Bill will include the Loan Estimates. How will the member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) warm up to the question when he finds that the Margaret River is not on the Loan Estimates, while, say, the completion of the Esperance Railway is on them? Similarly, the member for Katanning (Mr. A. Thomson) on learning that owing to the carrying of this motion the Esperance Railway appears on the Loan Estimates and the Pingrup Railway does not. And the same thing may be said of the member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Johnston) if the Dwarda Railway is not on the Estimates, while, once again, the Esperance Railway is. By means of this motion the Premier will be able to put through the Loan Estimates in one night. I ask hon. members in all seriousness to consider, are we justified in suspending the Standing Orders, and thus enable any measure to be

put through in one sitting, and enable any message from the Council to be dealt with during the sitting in which it reaches us, and all this while we know that legislation of such a controversial character is to be brought forward, legislation of a character more controversial than any I have known since the commencement of the war. Until the cards are laid on the Table by the Premier, until we know exactly what is going to be done—I have no objection to small Bills going through with a suspension to small Standing Orders—I must oppose the motion.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN (Forrest) [5.21]: I support the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) in his protest against the motion. It is the function of an Opposition to step in at times for the purpose of protecting the public. If ever there was a time when the public needed protection against slipshod legislation and faulty Acts, it is the present. The Opposition would be foolish to grant this power to the Government. I do not say the Premier is the type of leader who would abuse such a motion if carried—

The Premier: You know very well the House would not let me.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: There is a big majority on the other side of the Chamber, and hon. members opposite are anxious to get into recess. The Premier has intimated that he is desirous of getting into recess before Christmas.

The Premier: Are not you?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Not if we are to be asked to consider the Bills forecasted by the Premier. There is also the proposal forecasted by the Minister for Works last night. The licensing measure is a revenue proposal. It is absolutely impossible for us to deal with those Bills before Christmas.

The Premier: There is not a man in the Chamber who does not now understand the Licensing Bill, every word of it.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The Premier knows what happened in 1911, when a Licensing Bill was debated for weeks and weeks. The Premier now introduces a Licensing Bill containing new features, a measure which, notwithstanding any merits it may have, will certainly arouse strenuous opposition in various quarters. I protest against the methods of the Government, and I am not in the habit of protesting merely for the sake of protesting. What is the record of this session so far? What have we done as yet? At the end of the session the Premier will be able to give an interview to the Press and say that Parliament has churned out 36 or 48 Acts of Parliament. But what is the collective gain to the community from those Acts? Looking through the Notice Paper, one finds that the bulk of the Bills there are tiddly-winking proposals.

The Premier: Some of the important Bills are not on the Notice Paper.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: There are on the Notice Paper measures of interest to little coteries of people who desire special legislative protection; but as to increasing production, improving the finances, or granting any general boon to the community, all such proposals are lacking. The important measures are left over to the last eight days of Parliament. Last night the Minister for Works intimated the bringing down of a proposal in which this side of the House, and also the country, are deeply interested. That Bill—

Mr. SPEAKER: We had better discuss that Bill when it comes forward.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I am justified in buttressing my argument by trying to show the futility of trying to get up at Christmas and to deal with those Bills.

Mr. SPEAKER: We can only deal with what we have before us.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The proposal foreshadowed by the Minister for Works is sure to arouse the keenest opposition. Why could it not have been brought down four or five months ago? The Government announced on the hustings their policy of selling the State trading concerns. On the 12th March last they got a topping majority. We met here in July, and we frequently went home at 8 o'clock at night, though the Solicitor General could have drafted the Bill in question 10 weeks ago.

The Minister for Works: You knew of the Bill and so you are not surprised.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I am surprised that the Minister could not have had that Bill drafted for discussion here when Parliament had little to do. It is a fair proposition to grant suspension of the Standing Orders under ordinary conditions, that is to say, when the bulk of the legislation is through its second reading, and when Parliament thus knows what is to come. Every year the Premier puts the blue pencil through various Bills and says, "We are not going to waste more time over them." There are four or five Bills on the Notice Paper which will surely go by the board, and there are motions on the Notice Paper which will never be heard of again. Why does not the Premier intimate to the House that of the measures on the Notice Paper the Government desire to push on with these and desire to drop those? That is a simple method of ending up harmoniously and getting through the work. But if the Bills foreshadowed by the Premier and the Minister for Works are to be seriously considered, we shall have to sit here for several more weeks; and no one desires a summer session, because this is not a very good place to legislate in during the extreme heat. The members of the Government are deserving of censure for not having utilised the early part of the session for these Bills, which could then have been introduced. Exigencies of management are, of course, such that Bills introduced to-day could in

very many cases not have been introduced two months ago. But one measure that could have been introduced long ago, a measure representing Government policy, is the Bill forecasted by the Minister for Works last night.

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not think a Bill should be discussed at length in anticipation, though the hon. member may refer to it.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I do not intend to discuss it at length, because I do not know its provisions. What I do know is that there will be something doing when we get that Bill. I object to giving to a Government with such a majority the power to force through measures objectionable to the Opposition. The Opposition have been most generous during the last two or three sessions. The Premier himself said a little while ago that he had no obstruction, that he had the Opposition with him. A man in such a position should show results, but the Premier will not get results by this method. Though the Premier himself may have been busy enough, Ministers generally have dilly-dallied with their legislative programme. They wasted the time of Parliament by sending us home at 8 o'clock in the evening for a month.

The Premier: That is not correct.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Members are now being kept nearly all night to make up for time lost in the early part of the session, and as a consequence the best results are not being got. I would not mind agreeing to the motion if it applied only to proposals which we have already discussed. As regards proposals not yet touched by Parliament, however, the proposition to suspend the Standing Orders is not fair; and as a member of the Opposition I protest against the adoption of such a method.

Hon. T. WALKER (Kanowna) [5.29]: I desire to add my protest against the procedure proposed. It is, comparatively speaking, an innovation. I have had a good many sessions in Parliament, but I have never known a Government to come down with a motion of this kind, within eight days of the probable close of the session, and not let the House know precisely what measures would be covered by the motion. I do not think there is an instance of it. I appeal to the oldest members in this Chamber whether they can think of such an instance. There is not such a case. Why should we make this innovation, which is a most dangerous one? If we pass the motion with our eyes shut, blind-folded so to speak, any measure, even of the most drastic character, may be brought forward in this Chamber. By means of the closure and the suspension of the Standing Orders, it may be carried through without it being possible to offer a protest. No criticism will then be effective and no review will alter the situation. This is a prostitution of parliamentary procedure, and constitutes a dangerous precedent. I have already drawn

attention to the fact that we are not told what we are expected to do for the remainder of the session, and yet we are asked to carry this motion. Day after day we have gone on without coming to a decision as to what shall be done. Surely we have a right to be taken into the confidence of the Government, and to know precisely what is expected of us. There may be some measures which, at any stage of any session, it would be disastrous to deal with in the way that is now proposed. It would be disastrous to spring a surprise upon us at the last moment, and to find that we could not consider it because of this motion. If we are to have no fresh legislation, and nothing additional to the business list is to be added, I have no objection to the motion being passed.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And no controversial matters.

Hon. T. WALKER: I am as anxious to facilitate the business as any member. If it is the intention of the Government to close the session before Christmas, and they have partially given the public that assurance, they must have a sense of proportion, and must tell us what measures will be considered during the remainder of the days open to us for that purpose, and must assure us that no surprise will be sprung upon the Chamber. They have not done that. In fact, there are hints that some very controversial measures are to come down at the last moment, and to come down after we have been bound hand and foot. Criticism will then be closed to us and consideration will be denied to us. We are supposed to be a deliberative body which gives consideration to all measures, not a body like an automaton, or a penny-in-the-slot machine, to put a Bill in at one end and let it come out at the other. We are supposed to weigh and study the provisions of every Bill, and to collect all the information that will throw light upon the subject and enable us to form a judgment which is sound and will bear the test of time. That cannot be done at the latter end of the session when the Standing Orders are suspended and everything is being rushed through. We are asked to take Government measures for granted, and allow them to be rushed through in the same manner that a sausage machine turns out sausages. No amendment or alteration of any kind will be permissible. I object to being bound in that manner. I will not vote for this motion until the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition have taken the House, into their confidence, and have declared precisely what measures it is intended to deal with during the session. When they have done that I can agree to a motion of this kind. I will not, blindfolded, vote for a motion that may precipitate measures through this Chamber, which it would be a disgrace to pass hastily.

Mr. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [5.35]: It is hardly fair to introduce new Bills embodying absolutely new principles, and to pass them through in accordance with this motion.

The Minister for Works: Which Bills are you referring to?

Mr. WILLCOCK: There may be Bills of that kind.

Mr. SPEAKER: We cannot discuss what may occur; we must wait until something actually occurs.

Hon. T. Walker: This motion presents an opportunity for anything to come.

Mr. WILLCOCK: We have had no explanation as to what is likely to occur. Last night something in the nature of a bomb-shell was thrown into the Chamber when the Minister for Works made the announcement in regard to the State trading concerns.

The Minister for Works: You did not leave me alone. I had to tell you something.

Mr. Munsie: No member on this side of the House anticipated it.

Mr. WILLCOCK: There was no indication that the Bill we have mentioned was coming before us, but outside Parliament things have been shaping themselves in such a manner that it would appear that a certain amount of pressure has been brought to bear upon the Government by certain bodies and organisations. Apparently the pressure has been strong enough to cause the Government to bring this Bill down. We should not give the Government the power they ask for in this instance. So far as Bills already on the Notice Paper are concerned, there would be no grave objection to the motion. I therefore move an amendment—

That in line 3, after the word "Bills," the words "already on the Notice Paper and have passed the second reading" be inserted.

Without the amendment, the Licensing Bill may be passed through all stages in one day. If the amendment is carried, I think it will meet with a more favourable reception than the motion as it now stands. It will give us an opportunity to give the fullest consideration to every measure that is now before us.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam—on amendment) [5.37]: My friends are very much concerned. One would think a motion of this kind had never yet been brought before the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Will the Premier deal with the amendment; he will have an opportunity of dealing with the motion afterwards.

The PREMIER: The amendment alters the whole motion.

Mr. Munsie: No it does not; the amendment gives you a fair deal.

The PREMIER: I have already told hon. members that I have no intention of depriving them of the opportunity of the fullest discussion upon Bills. It would be wrong if we introduced Bills and tried to bludgeon them through in a few hours. No one worthy of a seat in this House would attempt to do that.

Mr. Munsie: Are you prepared to accept the amendment?

The PREMIER: No. I have already given my word regarding the Bill the hon. member is concerned about. The Licensing Bill will not be excluded by the amendment, and it can still be considered with the Standing Orders suspended.

Mr. Munsie: It has not passed the second reading.

The PREMIER: I have no intention of pushing any measure through the House. The licensing measure is a non-party measure. Members may give it the fullest consideration, and probably many amendments will be moved to it. If hon. members doubt my sincerity in the statements I have made, I am sorry. I have discussed the matter with the Leader of the Opposition, although it is true he had not the information hon. members have to-day. He saw no reason at all why the motion should not go through.

Mr. Munsie: Did he know about the trading concerns?

The PREMIER: Not at the time. I am sure the House will believe me when I say that I will not use this power to deprive them of the fullest opportunity of discussing measures.

Capt. Carter: They distrust us, not you.

The PREMIER: We really use this power to put a Bill through its formal stages in one sitting, instead of taking two or three different sittings. If a Bill is passed, surely the House is not running much risk if it allows it to be reported and read a third time, and sent on to the Upper House in one day. The House will have an opportunity of fully considering the various Bills. A Bill can be brought down, read a second time and further consideration adjourned until the following day.

Mr. Willcock: It need not be done under this motion.

The PREMIER: No. If hon. members feel that the motion will give us the right to put important Bills through in one day, or that we would exercise that right, I think they are wrong.

Hon. T. Walker: You should never have the power.

The PREMIER: They are right in saying we should not have the power if they think we will use it in that way.

Hon. T. Walker: It is possible.

The PREMIER: Surely Parliament will trust us not to do that; indeed Parliament would not allow us to do it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: All is well.

The PREMIER: If hon. members are really serious, and would like to know what every proposal is to be, and really do not believe that I will treat them as I have said I would, I do not know that I would mind postponing the discussion until next Tuesday. I know the House would agree with this motion if I wished. I do not want members to be suspicious.

Hon. T. Walker: You had better postpone it until next week.

The PREMIER: I have an understanding with the Leader of the Opposition, but it is

true he did not know as much as hon. members know to-day. I hope the House will not agree to the amendment.

Mr. MUNSIE (Hannans) [5.45]: The Premier has stated that he has no particular objection to postponing the consideration of this matter till Tuesday next. I hope anything I say will not be taken personally, because I do trust the Premier. I have every confidence in him. If the Premier gives me his word I will accept it as soon as that of any other man alive. The point is that the amendment moved by the member for Geraldton (Mr. Willcock) only aims at what the Premier says he is prepared to do. If the Premier is prepared to do that, why does he not accept the amendment? Everyone would then be satisfied. During the ten years' experience I have had in Parliament, a similar motion has always been agreed to by the House prior to Christmas, but I have never known such a motion moved when we have had measures such as are on the Notice Paper to-day. The Premier should be prepared to let the amendment go through.

The Minister for Works: What are the Bills that you take exception to?

Mr. MUNSIE: The Closer Settlement Bill is one on which we have only had one speech, and on which the Leader of the Country Party has the adjournment. We should have some time to discuss that measure. I know quite well that the Premier has no intention of applying the gag to the House, but while the Premier may be of that opinion, he does not know that some other member sitting on his side of the House may not take the matter out of his hands.

The Premier: Oh, no.

Mr. MUNSIE: The Workers' Homes Act Amendment Bill is another which we must have time to consider, although that is being dealt with in Committee. There is the Licensing Bill, however, and the Bill which was indicated by the Minister for Works last night regarding the State Trading Concerns. I would object to those two Bills being pushed through. These Bills are practically all those to which the amendment applies. I think the Premier would be quite safe in accepting the amendment, which is not moved for the purpose of slighting him in any degree.

The Premier: If we deal with the amendment, I will postpone the further consideration of the motion until the Leader of the Opposition returns.

Mr. Willcock: On that assurance of the Premier, I ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

On motion by Minister for Works, debate adjourned.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1921-22.

Report of Committee of Ways and Means adopted.

BILLS (3)—THIRD READING.

1, Bank Holidays Amendment.

2, North Fremantle Rates Validation.
Transmitted to the Council.

3, Reciprocal Enforcement of Maintenance Orders.

Passed.

BILL—CLOSER SETTLEMENT.

Second Reading.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [5.54]: This Bill is one, the passage of which has become almost imperative in the interests of the State. The necessity for such a measure has been accentuated by the difficulties regarding commerce and industry as the result of the war. The position to-day is abnormal. The expenditure on public utilities throughout the agricultural areas and the necessity for securing traffic, has resulted in the measure being brought before Parliament, so that the lands adjacent to the existing railways may be brought into full occupation and may result in the increased productivity of those lands. This is necessary in order that the land, which is capable of production, shall be brought into a stage of greater production, so that traffic may be available for the railways. The passage of the Bill will enhance the productive value of Western Australia and reduce the cost of the lines running through those particular areas where at present remunerative traffic is not available. As a result of a consideration of the Bill, I was led to inquire as to how the land had been first taken up and under what conditions it had come into the possession of the early settlers. In the course of my investigations, I came across some interesting information. Through the courtesy of Mr. Battye, the Public Librarian, I was shown some documents of great value and interest. It appears that in 1828 a syndicate was formed in England to take up land in Western Australia, and that syndicate proposed to bring out 10,000 settlers.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Which land did that refer to?

Mr. HARRISON: Land in the vicinity of the Swan.

Mr. SPEAKER: Is that land covered by the Bill?

Mr. HARRISON: It does refer to the land covered by the Bill and I want to work up to that position, to show that this land, which was secured by people in accordance with the agreement I shall refer to, is still in some cases held in an unproductive state. The necessity was imposed upon the people securing the land in those days to make it productive, and what applied in the early days should surely apply to-day.

Mr. SPEAKER: Will the hon. member inform me that the land he is dealing with is that covered by the Bill?

Mr. HARRISON: Some of it, which is in the vicinity of existing railways.

Mr. SPEAKER: I would like the hon. member to assure me on that point.

Mr. HARRISON: I do. In the course of my investigation of these documents, I find reference to a gentleman named Peel. I have heard references to a Peel Estate, which requires improvements.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: But the Government own that estate now.

Mr. HARRISON: There are other lands too. These references to the early settlement of Western Australia are instructive.

Mr. SPEAKER: I can only allow the hon. member to deal with the Bill before the House. I cannot permit him to go back into ancient history.

Mr. HARRISON: The Bill before the House is in respect to lands in the vicinity of the existing railways which were occupied and became freehold properties prior to the railways being built. Now the railways are there they are being run at a loss because there is not sufficient traffic for them. If these particulars do not bring the references I desire to make within the scope of the Bill, I do not know what it will be possible to deal with. Some of the land is within 12 miles of a railway.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: In any case, Clause 3 of the Bill will cover your references.

Mr. HARRISON: Some of the land which was taken up in these early days is still at the unproductive stage. I was going to refer to these gentlemen in England who formed a syndicate to encourage people to come to Western Australia and they were to bring out 10,000 immigrants, drawn from England, Scotland, and Ireland. They were to secure the land under cheap conditions. Land was to be obtained at the rate of 1s. 6d. per acre and for every £3 they brought out in value, capital or stock, they would get 200 acres for each individual. They paid their freight and passage money and so forth. It is surely interesting that some of these lands which have reverted to other gentlemen, are still unoccupied by settlers and not fully improved in the sense that the Bill implies. In payment of their expenses, which they estimated at £30 per head of the people taken out, they expressed themselves willing to take grants of land at a valuation of 1s. 6d. per acre, and they further promised to provide proper surveyors for the purpose of allocating to every male not less than 200 acres of land from the area they were to receive. The objects which the syndicate had in view and for which such large tracts of land were required were said to be the cultivation of cotton, tobacco, sugar, flax, and various drugs for which the climate was suited—the rearing of horses for the East Indian trade—and the establishment of large herds of cattle and swine for the purpose of supplying His Majesty's or other shipping with salt provisions. That was in 1825, and those lands are not pro-

ducing these commodities to-day. This Bill is designed to secure production on those lands. I have in my hand one of the original agreements dated 13th January, 1829, which reads—

Regulations for the guidance of those who may propose to embark as settlers for the new settlement on the Western coast of New Holland. 1, His Majesty's Government do not intend to incur any expense in conveying settlers to the new colony on the Swan River, and will not feel bound to defray the expense of supplying them with provisions or other necessities after their arrival there, nor to assist their removal to England or elsewhere should they be desirous of quitting the colony. 2, Such persons as may arrive in that settlement before the end of the year 1830 will receive, in the order of their arrival, grants of land free of quit rent, proportioned to the capital which they may be prepared to invest in the improvement of the land and of which capital they may be able to produce satisfactory proofs to the Lieutenant Governor (or other officer administering the Colonial Government) or to any two officers of the local Government appointed by the Lieut. Governor for that purpose, at the rate of 40 acres for every sum of £3 which they may be prepared so to invest. 3, Under the head of investment of capital will be considered stock of every description, all implements of husbandry and other articles which may be applicable to the purposes of productive industry or which may be necessary for the establishment of the settler on the land where he is to be located. The amount of any half pay or pension which the applicant may receive from the Government will also be considered as so much capital.

Mr. SPEAKER: How does that affect the Bill under discussion?

Mr. HARRISON: I want to get to paragraph 6.

Mr. SPEAKER: Then start on paragraph 6.

Mr. O'Loughlen: It is a historic document, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. HARRISON: Paragraph 6 reads:—

Any grant of land thus allotted, of which a fair proportion of at least one-fourth shall not have been brought into cultivation, otherwise improved, or reclaimed from its wild state to the extent of 1s. 6d. per acre to the satisfaction of the local Government within three years of the date of the license of occupation shall, at the end of the three years, be liable to a payment of 6d. per acre, into the Public Chest of the settlement, and at the expiration of seven years more, should the land still remain in an uncultivated or unimproved state it will revert absolutely to the Crown.

If such a condition could be enforced in the very earliest days of settlement, surely there is an obligation on us to-day to take all

possible steps to bring unutilised land under cultivation.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: How do you know that the land is not improved?

Mr. HARRISON: Under the Bill that question will be decided by the board. Has not the member for North Perth read the Bill? The board will be able to acquire land if it falls short of the requisite improvements, irrespective of what the owner's estimate of the improvements may be.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: You indicated that they had not carried out the original undertaking.

Mr. HARRISON: I did not. I was directing attention to the conditions operating in the earliest days of settlement.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: Then there was no point in reading those extracts.

Mr. SPEAKER: If the member for Avon addressed himself to the Bill, he would get along better.

Mr. HARRISON: This is a machinery Bill devised to bring under cultivation the lands adjacent to our railways. It is intended to appoint a board of three members, one of whom shall be an official of the Agricultural Bank and one an official of the Lands Department. It is wise to have an official of the Agricultural Bank on the board, because he will have the requisite knowledge regarding the financial side of the business. The officer from the Lands Department should not have a fixed appointment, but should have a seat on the board only while the board were considering lands regarding which he had special knowledge. The third member of the board who, as the Premier indicated, will be changed from time to time, should be a man with a practical knowledge of the conditions of soil, climate, and capabilities of the land in the particular areas under consideration. If it is found that certain areas are not producing what they should and are suitable for closer settlement, the presence on the board of a man with local knowledge should be invaluable.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: This is not a Bill for closer settlement, but one to get the Government to lay out more money to buy land which owners cannot sell.

Mr. HARRISON: No one knows better than the member for North-East Fremantle what the object of the Bill is.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: What about the Harvey estate?

Mr. O'Loughlen: What about a little more history?

Hon. T. Walker: The history was the best part of your speech; I wish you would get back to it.

Mr. HARRISON: Have I the floor, Mr. Speaker, or are members of the Opposition supposed to be addressing you by way of interjection?

Mr. SPEAKER: If the hon. member addressed the Chair he would get on better.

Mr. HARRISON: The interjections of hon. members do not assist at all.

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not think they were intended to assist.

Mr. HARRISON: The powers of the board as provided in the Bill are certainly extensive, but extensive powers are absolutely necessary to make the measure effective and carry out the desires of the Government. The board can be relied upon to make a thorough investigation regarding the value and the suitability and the productive capabilities of the land so that when people are settled on these resumed areas, it will be possible for them to make good. We all know that the land in the river flats was acquired in the early days and that the railways generally followed the river flats. The first settlements were taken up with river frontages running back in many instances from five to seven miles. The land was used for pastoral purposes. In the early nineties there came the stimulus of the gold discoveries, and land which previously was utilised only for pastoral purposes was devoted to agricultural pursuits. Development followed rapidly, but people who wanted land for agricultural purposes had to go away beyond the large holdings to which I have referred. Many such areas were developed at a distance from the railways, and production was curtailed on that account, while the larger estates were not producing anything like commensurately with their areas. When the railway was pushed on to Nangeenan Mr. Fred Growden, the pioneer of that district, was responsible for giving a big flip to land settlement, and areas out there were developed much more rapidly than elsewhere in the State. This was the beginning of the opening up of the wheat belt. It is impossible in these days to reduce the working costs of our railways, and the earning power of our railways is restricted by reason of the lines running through so much land that has been only partially improved. Such lands must be brought under full production. The Premier is out to stimulate greater production and development. Therefore I support the Bill.

Mr. O'Loughlen: It might be the means of enabling people to unload land which they could not sell otherwise.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. HARRISON: Before tea I was speaking of the personnel of the board consisting of three, one a member of the Agricultural Bank, one an officer of the Lands Department, and the third a man with local knowledge. The officer of the Lands Department should be fully conversant with the conditions of the district in which lies the land which is the subject of negotiations between the board and the landowner. Should land in another district also come within the purview of the board, then if the Lands Department officer be not acquainted with the conditions of that district, another officer should be appointed in his stead. The same principle should be made apply to the third member of the board

who, in my opinion, should be a farmer who had for a long period worked land in that district and so would be conversant, not only with the local methods of farming, but with the value of the land. It is provided that the board may inquire into the suitability for closer settlement of any block of freehold land and that, after receiving notification that it is the intention of the board to resume that block or to insist that improvements should be made, the owner has two options, namely, to improve it himself, or, alternately, to get out his surveys and plans for subdivision, submit them to the board and show how the blocks are to be cut up. In the event of this alternative being determined upon, it would be a good idea if the subdivision plan were placed in the long room of the Lands Department where it would get the fullest publicity. Again, if the owner of the land be not satisfied with the board's proposal he has an appeal to the Minister. The Bill provides also that in such event an arbitrator or valuator may be called in to determine the price. In Committee it may be found advisable to expand or curtail some of the provision. In the time I have had at my disposal to go through the Bill I have concluded that the measure will work satisfactorily both to the land owner and, if properly administered, to those who may take up land for closer culture. The Country Party stands, not for men who hold land, but for men who use land. We wish to stimulate land settlement and, at the same time, to improve marketing facilities. We are out to preserve the privileges of the producers, the men engaged in agriculture. I trust the Bill will pass the second reading. Since the Bill treats of freehold land, I am surprised that when I desired to refer to some ancient documents I was prevented from doing so by you, Sir, on the grounds that those documents were not relevant to the Bill. My desire was merely to show that they referred to the original alienation of the land it was now proposed to resume for closer settlement.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [7.36]: I endorse the Bill in its main principles. It arose out of the general cry for unimproved land values taxation, the underlying idea of which was to burst up large estates. It must be borne in mind that the large estates were acquired under the existing land laws, and that any drastic measure for taxation would be unjust if it had the effect of robbing those who took up the land in the conviction that the land laws would be respected.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Whoever suggested robbery?

Mr. PICKERING: I say that an increased unimproved land values taxation to the extent so frequently indicated in this House would have that effect. The Bill is an honest attempt to meet the difficulty of dealing with large estates. I remember that when I took up land in Western Australia the then existing conditions tended to induce settlers to take up very much larger holdings than they could hope to handle.

Mr. O'Loughlen: They should never have been left under C.P. conditions.

Mr. PICKERING: But they were, and the settlers were induced to take up larger areas than they could hope to develop.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Some of them are glad to have those holdings to-day.

Mr. PICKERING: Not because of the benefits accruing from holding them, although perhaps in view of some other phase of the broad question. But, generally speaking, the lesson learnt by members while travelling through the South-West was that those settlers with reasonably sized holdings alone showed indications of prosperity. Land owners will welcome the Bill, for it will give them an opportunity to get rid of a large portion of their unwieldy holdings on terms which will not mean an actual loss to them.

Mr. O'Loughlen: If they are anxious to get rid of them, why do they not subdivide their holdings themselves?

Mr. PICKERING: There are cases which will need special consideration. I refer to that particular object lesson to be seen by anybody travelling through the South-West in the shape of the estate purchased by Mr. Kitchen. That man has given practical evidence of his sincere desire to develop his holding. Nobody can cavil at the amount of development he has achieved on that property.

The Minister for Works: How many such cases are there?

Mr. PICKERING: I say this is an exceptional case.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Bill will not apply to him.

Mr. PICKERING: It might, because he has something like 6,000 acres. He has set an example which is being emulated by many of the settlers around him. I myself have noticed a marked improvement in the locality since he went there. One of the objects of the Bill is to bring into fruition much of the land at present lying idle in the South-West. A great deal of that land has been very much under-valued. I believe that with the dissemination of knowledge as to grasses suitable to the locality, we shall find that a great deal of land hitherto considered worthless will in smaller holdings develop into valuable properties and will result in an improvement in the railway revenue.

Mr. O'Loughlen: What was the original price of the land?

Mr. PICKERING: It might have been very small, perhaps less than 10s. per acre in some cases; in those days it depended largely on what capital the settler had. Some of the people down there have spent their lives in developing their holdings.

Mr. Lambert: Not developing holdings, but holding holdings.

Mr. PICKERING: It is all very well for the hon. member to be facetious, but even the initial operation of ringbarking the country requires years before its full benefit is enjoyed; and ringbarking, if followed up by the necessary suckering, involves the ex-

penditure of time and money, and a considerable length of occupancy. There is some value in the benefit which accrues to a property through mere beneficial occupancy. It must be remembered, also, that although many of the settlers took up too much land, they have developed their holdings just as well as they could.

The Minister for Works: How many are there?

Mr. PICKERING: Perhaps not many in that district with unduly large areas but, taking the South-West as a whole, their number is considerable. The constitution of the board should give entire satisfaction. Two of the members are to be representatives of the Government, and the third a local man of farming experience. That should be eminently satisfactory.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Bill does not say that he shall be a local man.

Mr. PICKERING: The principle laid down by the Premier that the third member should possess local knowledge is a thoroughly sound one. A big responsibility lies on this board in the assessing of values. It is difficult to assess the productive value of the varying soils throughout the country. Much of the land with which I am familiar, was, a while ago, considered worthless, but time and labour have demonstrated that most of that country is really valuable. It must be borne in mind that the difficulties are great and that reasonable allowances must be made. The Leader of the Country Party described the three courses which may be pursued under the Bill. All these three are reasonable and I do not think that anyone, with the interests of the State at heart, will resent the procedure it is intended to adopt. If there is an apparent injustice, the settler concerned will have the right to appeal to the Supreme Court.

Mr. O'Loughlin: The State may suffer an injustice.

Mr. PICKERING: The value put upon the land is subject to the approval and endorsement of the board, and the conditions under which it can be sold are subject to the approval and endorsement of the board. It is to be assumed, of course, that the board will be so experienced as to make the price and the conditions equitable to those who take up the land. With regard to the third alternative, that which provides for reversion to the Crown, from my experience of what has happened in the past, I will feel sorry for the applicants. Further than that, an owner may require that the whole of the land may be taken up. The Bill, I understand, is to be incorporated with the Lands Purchase Act, which Act will make up for anything not provided for in the Bill. If the owner of the land demonstrates that he has improved his property sufficiently, he can then be discharged from the operations of the measure. Taking all things into consideration, I think the public should be satisfied that the

Premier has made an honest endeavour in this connection, and whilst treating with justice the pioneers of the country, and those who have taken up land and worked it for so many years, the fact has not been forgotten that they took up the land under conditions which recent years have materially changed. I believe that if any further increase in the way of taxation on the land is required, it should not be in the nature of an unimproved land values tax, but rather in the nature of an unimproved land tax, and if it is found necessary to increase taxation, the Government should adopt the method I suggest. I support the second reading of the Bill.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle): [7.50]: In my opinion the title of the Bill is wrong. It says that it is "an Act relating to the acquisition and disposal of land for closer settlement." My opinion is that it should only be a measure relating to the acquisition of land. If hon. members will peruse the Bill carefully they will see that under its provisions there is no reference whatever in regard to a closer settlement scheme. As a matter of fact it will place the owner of land, or those people who do not fully utilise their land, at a great advantage. It is true that the Commonwealth, according to the latest conference held, has decided on a limitation of about £600 in regard to future soldier settlements. That is the amount which they will advance, and consequently, those who have not been able to unload land which they owned, under the settlement scheme, will be in a very good position by reason of the fact that they will be able to unload it under this Bill. There are people in this State who own large areas of land. They have endeavoured to sell this land but the price they have asked has been such that they have not been able to find buyers, and under the Lands Purchase Act the Government, to a large extent, have their powers reduced in regard to the value placed on the land by the officers, and then again also with regard to cash. But under the Bill before us, what will be the position? The Government can inspect the land and see whether it is being utilised or improved to its full capacity, and they then decide, if such is not the case, to serve a notice on the owner. The owner then has two alternatives, either to subdivide the land on the terms laid down in the Bill or pay an additional taxation. What is that additional taxation? A mere fleabite which is not worth considering! There are very few owners of land in Western Australia to-day who, under that provision, will pay any additional tax. The member for Sussex instanced the case of a man with 6,000 acres of land. That man has spent a considerable sum in developing a portion only of that area, but that is all considered as one area, and if the holder has expended up to one-third of the value, he only has to pay one tax, income or land, whichever is the higher, so far as the land is concerned, and he has £350 worth of

land, the unimproved value of which is 10s. He has a £260 exemption, and, further, if his income from the land amounts to more than the land tax, he is exempt altogether. There is no clause in the Bill which provides that he shall pay both taxes. So that the position is that the holder of the land is exempt from the payment of land tax and he will be further exempt under this Bill.

The Premier: I think you are wrong.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: As hon. members know, there are many people who have taken up small holdings of 1,000, 2,000 and 3,000 acres. Those people are not in the position to utilise more than about a third of their land, and it will take them all their time to improve that much. The position then is that so far as the unutilised portion is concerned, they will be clear from taxation on the lot, because their income tax will be higher than the land tax. What is the good of saying, "If you do not sell this land you will have to pay three times the tax," when the individual does not pay anything at all?

Mr. Underwood: Three times nothing.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That is the position, but they have another option, or rather the Government have an option, and it is that they can take the land if they so desire and pay compensation under the Public Works Act. Will any hon. member tell me that any claims for compensation made under the Public Works Act have not been against the interests of the Government? The proposal is at once an incentive to those holding large areas which they are not using, to dispose of them to the Government. The Bill contains an invitation to them to do so. They will then get their full value, and in all probability something in addition, because the Government must take action under the Public Works Act. This is not a closer settlement Bill, it is a Bill to enable the Government to acquire additional land from people who, at the present time, cannot sell that land for the amount which they desire to get for it. Let me quote an instance, the case of a man who valued his land at £2,500. He went to the court under the Public Works Act, and the court awarded him £4,000. In another case where a man valued his land at £250, he received £380. There is an instance of that description which can be quoted where an owner in the City of Perth valued his land for taxation purposes at £1,000 was awarded about £8,000. It is all very well to say that compensation must be paid in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Act. That Act, however, is responsible for awards far greater than the real value of the properties. The court, in assessing the value, takes into consideration the position of the tenant as well. What will happen if this land comes under the closer settlement scheme? Interest will have to be charged to meet the payments under the award given by the court, and the land becomes so expen-

sive that no small man will be able to afford to take it up. There are instances to-day with which hon. members are familiar, where too much has been paid for land in the past even under the Lands Purchase Act, and this, too, by agreement, and not under an award of the court, and because of which it has not been possible to unload. There are instances also where the Government have had to reduce the price considerably below the amount which they paid for the land to enable them to dispose of it for settlement purposes. Therefore, how can we call this a closer settlement Bill? It is far from being such a thing. There is only one way by which we can bring about closer settlement, and that is by imposing a stiff tax on those people who will not utilise their land. Then it would be settled. Let a stiff unimproved land tax be put on. That is the only method.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: You would not tax the man who uses his land?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am dealing with the Bill, which refers to land not used to its full productiveness. There are some holdings on which ring-barking has been done over a small area, and that small area is cultivated. No doubt the clearing of that small area involved some considerable expense. On the balance of the holding a certain amount of ring-barking has also been done, but that is not sufficient improvement. The land is worth considerably more to the State for closer settlement, than for the running of a few sheep or cattle on the greater portion of it. Therefore, an adequate unimproved land value tax should be imposed to bring such holdings into complete use. Only a few weeks ago I had the pleasure of visiting Pinjarra, and then it was pointed out that even those working in that district, relatives of the land owners—owners who are prepared to sell if they can get their price—were not opposed to a land tax, which they thought would assist land settlement. It was stated that there were about seven settlers on the river frontage, where there is room for dozens. We visited a beautiful orchard near Pinjarra, the owner of which would probably be relieved, under this Bill, from paying tax on the remaining large area of land he holds in the district.

The Premier: You are quite wrong.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Premier knows that what I am saying is true. The present land tax is one-halfpenny in the pound on the unimproved value of the land.

The Premier: It is one penny in the pound.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Not if one-third of the land is improved.

The Premier: But you would not take that orchard from the man, would you?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No: I am not proposing to touch the orchard. What I mean is that the improvements in the shape of the orchard would be sufficient to relieve the man, under this Bill, from taxation on the remainder of his holding. Take the case of a person with 3,000 acres of land: if his income is £250 a year, and he has to pay a tax on a small portion of his land, the amount of tax on the £250 income

would be more than the land tax at 1½d. in the pound.

The Premier: But without the exemption the man would have to pay three times that tax.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: This Bill does not say so.

The Premier: I am sure you are wrong.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I may be. I am not a lawyer. However, I cannot read the Bill in any other way. The measure mentions three times, "subject to the provisions of the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act, 1907." How is this Bill going to make for closer settlement?

The Premier: It trebles the land tax.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: How much is three times nothing? Everything depends on the improvements which have been made. When I saw all that blow in the newspapers that we would probably have a Bill brought down for closer settlement purposes, I thought the Premier was about to do what his newspaper friends have been trying to force him to do for two or three years, and bring down a Bill to tax people who would not utilise their land, a Bill to tax them to an extent which would compel them to sell their unused land to other persons who would use it. But the Premier has not done that.

The Premier: Yes, I have.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If we have in this State an enormous acreage of unimproved land which persons have held for years, without effecting any improvements whatever, we should just pay them for that land whatever they paid for it, together with interest; for the purpose of the closer settlement we should make resumption compulsory, subject to such terms of payment.

The Premier: Would you not pay for improvements?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I would not pay one penny for the increased value given to the land by other settlers around improving their holdings.

Mr. Lambert: Or by the construction of railways.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes.

The Premier: But you would pay for improvements, surely?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am not dealing with improvements. I am speaking of land held unimproved. But the extra value given to land by other settlers improving their holdings, and by the action of the Government in making roads and railways and furnishing other facilities, that extra value, I say, should go to the State. Under such a system the Government would be in a position to encourage closer settlement, because they could subdivide the land and sell it at a reasonable price to men who will use it. Land acquired by the Government under this Bill will be simply a millstone round the neck of the man, who, in turn, buys it from the Government. Scores of thousands of acres of land in this country were sold by the Government at as low a price as 2s. 6d. per acre.

Mr. Underwood: Well, I would give the owner 3s. per acre.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That would be fair in some cases. I regret that the Premier should try to bluff the Chamber that this is a closer settlement Bill. That is pure bluff.

The Premier: I am not trying to bluff members.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Is it any wonder the member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) should support a Bill of this description? True, he says it is aimed at land-holders in the South-West. Are there in the South-West large numbers of landholders who have obtained heavy compensation from the Government for land resumed?

Mr. Pickering: A few.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I hope the Premier will take the Bill away, and sleep on it, and then recast it as a genuine closer settlement Bill. By no stretch of imagination could this be deemed a Bill for the purpose of acquiring land for closer settlement.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN (Forrest) [8-11]: I am disappointed with this shandygaff measure.

Mr. Underwood: Spot läger!

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: No; it is half-and-half. In view of the strenuous propaganda work accomplished through the Press, we could have expected something better. The "West Australian" has been putting up leading articles calling attention to the necessity for a tax on unimproved land values. The need for such taxation has been thundered through the land for years. During the last general election I thought new recruits for that policy were elected on the other side of the House. But there has been a remarkable silence from those recruits. Speeches made by certain hon. members during the general election appear to have been forgotten. During the debate on the Address-in-reply, and on subsequent occasions that offered, I have not heard any of those missionaries putting up the proposals they were understood to favour. They have had ample opportunity to do so ever since the session began.

Member: Some of the new ones did.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: That is true; but opportunities have presented themselves on three or four occasions. Following the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I say this Bill contains no penalising provision sufficient to prompt an owner to sell if he desires to hold his land. If he desires to retain control of his property, the penalty under this Bill will not deter him from doing so. For that reason no satisfactory results are to be expected from the passing of the measure. I have no intention of voting against the second reading. If the Premier thinks the effects of the measure will be beneficial, well and good; but the people who in the past took up large areas of Crown land and failed to improve them—frequently, it is true, for lack of sufficient means—should now be told plump and plain that they must make the land available. In the early days it may have been advisable to grant large areas of land in order to encourage people and capital to come into the country; but as the community grows, and as the country goes in for immigration, an economic law makes itself felt, a law which has compelled Parliaments all over the world to make the land available to the people. The member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) instanced that various people have taken up too large holdings in the wheat belt and in the South-West. Fortunately, in the South-West those people have been able to make huge sums by selling the timber on their pro-

perities. That has been one of the blunders of our land system in the past. The hon. member himself has been one of the fortunate ones in this respect. We see it advertised in the Press that he is the wealthiest man in Parliament. He must have received immense sums for the large quantity of timber on his C.P. property. Deluded settlers ringharked large areas of country but others are now reaping the reward of the past folly of Governments.

Mr. Lambert: They are the lazy ones.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I will not say that. They took up too much country to develop it. They are not all wealthy men like the member for Sussex, a man of unlimited means. It seems paradoxical that we should be considering this Bill at all, because our Agent-General in London, who works under specific instructions, has been advertising, at all events until very recently, in the "British Australasian" in flaring headlines, across the front page, statements that Western Australia has millions of acres of Crown land only awaiting the magic touch of man's hand to bring them into productivity. "Come to Western Australia, we have millions of acres of land." We are considering a Bill to-night which will give the Government authority, in the case of a few owners who are reluctant to sub-divide their estates, to buy the whole lot from them in order to let it out again in smaller lots. I have seen a good deal of the cutting up of large estates in the East. The Government, who were friendly to the rural producer, stepped in and acquired these properties, subdivided them, and put them on the market with the result that the new settler was handicapped from the start. That is our experience in the South-West. Some of the estates in the South-West were resumed for returned soldiers and retailed to them at too high a price. With the interest charges, the soldier will not be able to make headway for the next decade.

Mr. Pickering: You cannot improve those properties to-day at the same price.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The cost of materials has gone up. That is all right so far as the clearing the settlers have already done, but the new clearing will very greatly handicap the settler. I submit that we should be guided by the experience of the past. The Avondale estate was purchased from a member of Parliament for the sum of £54,000. This estate was reported by two land inspectors as containing 1,700 acres of granite hills. After it came into the hands of the Government it was hawked from one end of the country to the other, and the only hardy yeoman settler who took up any portion of it was Sir Newton Moore. He took up one block. On the Estimates we have year after year an item for the maintenance and upkeep of that estate. As a closer settlement proposition it was a dismal failure. Since then we have had a good deal of experience. We have paid out over a million pounds on these various estates.

The Premier: It was withdrawn from reserve.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: No one would take it up at four or five pounds an acre.

The Premier: Mr. Bath reserved it.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: It was eventually turned into a State farm, because something had to be

done with it. The Bill is rather a harmless little affair, and is not going to accomplish much. The member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) has stated that the settler will get justice under it. By acquiring property which the settler cannot utilize, and possibly cannot sell, the board in its treatment of the settlers will go beyond the realms of justice and over the borders of generosity. There are many people trying to sell their farms to-day, but they are not able to do so.

The Premier: Everyone is trying to sell something.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: If they see the opportunity of selling through the agency of this board they will unload a good deal of their land. I regret that Western Australia has not fallen into line with the other progressive bodies in the Commonwealth. Take for instance the Sydney municipality! They forced into use some valuable idle lands.

Mr. Underwood: There is a lot of idle land there.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The Sydney municipality derives an enormous revenue from taxation on unimproved land, and through that agency has been able to resume the slum areas in Sydney.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: Some Sydney councillors have derived revenue from other sources.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Just as some newspaper proprietors have derived revenue from sources just as questionable.

Mr. Underwood: Where was the vacant land in Sydney?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The whole of Oxford-street has been resumed by the Sydney Council.

Mr. Underwood: Was it vacant land?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: This land now brings in revenue which has enabled the Sydney Council to effect improvements which are the admiration of all beholders.

Mr. Sampson: And to reduce the rates.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Yes.

Mr. Underwood: They were only there for a year and then went out.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Cannot the hon. member get party prejudice out of his vision for once? He is so steeped in his blind bigotry concerning party affairs that he thinks, because Labour councillors only held office for 12 months, it was not possible for them to do anything within that period. He has so much unoccupied space in his head that he cannot appreciate my point. Apart from forcing into cultivation areas which to-day are unoccupied and unproductive of revenue, the benefits derived from a scientific system of taxing on unimproved land values are enormous. Naturally if the proposition is doing its work the revenue will diminish year by year. If it is effective in its purpose, there will come a time when there will be no revenue at all. That is when the land is fully forced into production.

The Premier: We have the Federal taxation for that purpose.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: That is not a scientific system. The Federal tax has had the effect of breaking up large estates which no State tax could get at.

Mr. Underwood: How many has it broken up?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: There are numbers of estates in Victoria and New South Wales that

have been affected in this way. I can procure the necessary statistics in five minutes if the hon. member so desires. We cannot be blind to facts and experience. The Federal law operates because some States refused to do their duty. It would have been better for Western Australia if we had stepped in prior to the imposition of the Federal tax, and obtained the revenue which the Federal Government have got from our land and from every other activity we possess.

The Premier: They would have taken it all the same.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: We would have had some of it before they started.

The Premier: Let us have a liquor tax!

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I am not going to oppose the Bill, but I do not think there is much utility about its provisions. I do not think we shall be able to say we have accomplished much in the way of the closer settlement of our lands. The only penalty clause in the Bill is to trouble the tax already imposed, which amounts to practically nothing. I therefore have not much hope of any benefit being derived from the Bill. I do think that the Premier, being guided—

The Premier: By you!

Mr. O'LOGHLEN:—as he is, by such a powerful newspaper as the "West Australian" which generally indicates the Government policy, and is able to give a forecast of what that policy is likely to be and generally hits the mark, could have brought forward a stronger proposal than this.

Mr. Willcock: They are five miles out in this Bill.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I think they are about 7½ miles out. The leader writer of that journal has written magnificent articles on the question of taxing on unimproved land values, and I am now waiting to see his comment on this Bill. It will probably not be satisfactory to the Premier.

Mr. Pickering: More taxation!

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: No doubt the hon. member will do his best to avoid taxation, just as other people do. If the Bill is to be effective and live up to its title as a proposition for the closer settlement of our lands it should contain such provision as will force into use land which to-day is held out of production. I am not enthusiastic about the Bill. We want closer settlement and want to get people to go upon our land. A lot of the land that we have looked upon as worthless is now found to be of value. The chemist has been at work and experience has shown us, as was the case with the Spanish settlement in the South-West, what can be won from inferior soil. Rather than force people to take up inferior soil, we should make the best of our unutilised lands available for them. A school bell is preferable to a sheep bell, but this Bill will not bring more schools into existence, and will not have the effect the title claims for it.

Mr. LAMBERT (Coolgardie) [8.25]: I regret the Premier has seen fit to deal in such a harmless way with probably the most important problem concerning the State to-day. The Premier knows that his financial embarrassment is due to the fact that we have a capital of £16,000,000 or £17,000,000

invested in our railway system. Probably 50 per cent. of the utilisable land lying adjacent to our railways is idle to-day. I am surprised to think that with the practical knowledge the Premier has, both of the necessity for improving our financial position in the first place, and secondly the necessity for utilising our unutilised lands, he should have brought in a measure of this kind. The Leader of the Country Party dealt with a lot of ancient history regarding the earlier acquirement of land in Western Australia. It matters nothing to us whether the people who are the owners and possessors of land to-day acquired it by grant from the Imperial Government or whether they purchased it or obtained it by any other legitimate means. The fact remains they are the possessors of the land to-day, and as representing the people of this State we have to deal with them in a reasonable manner, in their relationship to this State and to the interests of the State. Probably the hon. member would have a better knowledge of the land acquired by some of those, he has a veneration for, namely the aristocracy of England, Ireland, and Scotland, and their right to possess the land which they hold to-day of such great value. We have land adjacent to our railway system suitable for closer settlement. The chemist has to a large extent overcome many of the climatic and other conditions, which retarded the proper utilisation of our soil in the past. To-day almost any soil can be utilised for one purpose or another. To-day it is due only to stupid ignorance on the part of those who hold land that it is not utilised to the fullest extent.

Mr. Underwood: Have you ever tried?

Mr. LAMBERT: I have tried to teach the hon. member how land can better be utilised. It is not my fault if I have not had time to utilise it myself. A mistake was made in the earlier settlement of our more extensive areas in regard to the building and development of railways. We should have had a betterment tax on the land which was acquired when these railways were built. It is remarkable that in the few years we have spent £10,000,000 or £12,000,000 in building railways, a great proportion of the land affected was acquired for speculative purposes before the railways were built. It was a notorious fact a few years ago that there were those who were closely in touch with the Government, and were able to get information as to the proposed routes of railways. We need not deal with that question to any great extent, except to say that this iniquitous system operated to such an extent that it held up a considerable portion of our productive lands.

The Minister for Works: To what district do you refer?

Mr. LAMBERT: The Minister does not want to make us believe he does not know of certain land that was acquired by men in the know regarding a proposed railway route,

which knowledge enabled them to purchase land for speculative purposes.

The Minister for Works: Well, I do not know.

Mr. LAMBERT: Do not let the Minister assume such innocence. Let us deal with this question in a serious manner.

The Minister for Works: I am serious.

Mr. LAMBERT: To-day the finances of the State are going to the bad to the extent of from one-half to three-quarters of a million pounds per annum. I agree with the member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) that we cannot tax the people much more than they are taxed at the present time. The only salvation for Western Australia lies in the direction of increased production and that should be encouraged by every means. From that standpoint, I regret that the Premier has brought down what I consider a very harmless measure. Many members somewhat doubt the productiveness of our soils, and the South-West has been particularly referred to. I would remind hon. members that the South-West is not the only portion of the State to which a closer settlement Bill might apply. I recently visited portion of the South-West and saw different properties in various stages of development. I saw one which was a credit to the owner, and which should be seen by every farmer in Western Australia who has any regard for the higher farming of our lands. I refer to the property owned by the member for North Perth (Mr. MacCallum Smith). That hon. member acquired a property which was then of little productive value. He dealt with it by means of proper drainage and liming of the soil. He laid out the land in a reasonably scientific manner and now he has got that land to such a pitch that it is a credit to him, an example which is being emulated by many farmers in that part of the State.

The Minister for Works: He has paved the soil with sovereigns.

Mr. Wilson: What, and he a Scotsman!

Mr. LAMBERT: If he does not get the benefit from it, others will. If he has paved the soil with sovereigns and it is not proving a business proposition, it is the only unbusinesslike undertaking the member for North Perth has ever indulged in.

The Minister for Works: You are quite correct there.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. LAMBERT: That property has been developed, even though at the cost of a considerable amount of money, on broad and common sense lines. The methods by which that property was developed, can be applied to hundreds of thousands of acres in the South-West. I do not care whether the individual possesses the money necessary to develop the land on such lines, but I hope the Government, by lending scientific knowledge through the efforts of the expert officers, will encourage hundreds of farmers to develop their properties on a scientific basis in that fertile part of the State. I am not prepared to believe that the Premier is in-

sincere in bringing forward this measure. I hope he is as sincere as I believe he is, and that he will accede to the desire of the House not to confiscate land, but to make the owners of the land realise their responsibility to the State. We cannot continue with the present system of financial drift, and at the same time lock up big acreages alongside an unpaying railway system. To that extent, it is the bounden duty of every member of this House to try to perfect a system which will bring into production every cultivable acre coming within the scope of this measure. I believe the measure can be improved, and that when the powers provided by it are exercised, it will bring land within the jurisdiction of the board. When a man receives a notice that his land is to be brought within the scope of the board, he should be compelled to declare the value of that land. If the owner of the land is not prepared to subdivide his property, then the Government should exercise the right to tax him upon the value he himself places upon the property. Failing that, the Government should have the right to purchase it at the price at which the owner himself has assessed the property. Nothing could be fairer than that. I hope the Premier will give consideration to that question. It works successfully and equitably in New Zealand.

The Premier: I do not think so.

Mr. Latham: Not on those lines.

Mr. LAMBERT: For taxation purposes, the owner of a property declares the value of his land, and the Government in New Zealand can come in and acquire it at any time at the valuation the owner places upon it.

Mr. Munsie: For taxation purposes.

Mr. McCallum: Plus 10 per cent.

Mr. LAMBERT: That is the position. I only hope the Premier will take heed of the constructive criticism he has heard during the discussion of this measure, criticism which may go far to improve the working of the Bill and result in much additional land being acquired and brought into productivity.

Mr. SAMPSON (Swan) [8.37]: I am rather surprised that the Bill has not gone further. I had hoped that some method of taxation, having for its object the forcing into use of those unutilised and unproductive lands within our State, would have been brought down. I can assure the member for Forrest (Mr. O'Loughlen) that in this respect I have never wavered. The unfortunate position of the State to-day has largely been brought about because our lands are not being used to the fullest extent.

The Premier: It is on account of the want of people.

Mr. SAMPSON: Speaking of the want of people, I would like to instance a case which came under my notice. A young friend of mine being desirous of becoming a producer—

Mr. Teesdale: What sex?

Mr. SAMPSON: Male. For the purpose of the Act, I understand that "male" embraces "female." However, this friend of mine was anxious to take up land. That young man had to travel a distance of 14 miles from the railway before he could obtain land such as he desired. That is a pathetic circumstance when we realise the vast tracts of country in Western Australia that are not being used. It is because of the non-utilisation of our lands that our railways are incurring their present losses. Last year the railways were faced with a loss of £418,000. If a vigorous policy in regard to the taxation of land, not at present utilised, were brought forward, much land would be forced into use. The present Bill places upon the Government the necessity for taking the initiative. If the unoccupied land were taxed, it would place the onus upon the owner of that land of paying additional taxation—

The Minister for Works: Or selling up.

Mr. SAMPSON: I suggest that the tax should be made sufficiently heavy to make him use the land or else part with it. I do not know that we are doing a man a kindness in permitting him to hold land which he is not using and has no reasonable opportunity of using. This trouble exists in the South-West to-day and is to be seen in the wheat areas as well.

Mr. Latham: Not freehold land.

Mr. SAMPSON: It exists to a considerable extent. There are thousands of acres, as the member for York (Mr. Latham) knows, which are unutilised, and the present holders of which have no opportunity of bringing into use.

Mr. Latham: Not in the wheat areas.

Mr. SAMPSON: If a man desires to hold land for prospective heirs, or in order to benefit from the improvements effected by his labours—

The Minister for Works: You do not object to a man providing for a family.

Mr. SAMPSON: I have no objection to that at all, but when the man, to whom I have referred, is forced to go 14 miles away from a railway, hon. members will appreciate that from an economic standpoint, it is both unsound and unfair. No one at the present time should be forced out to such a distance. The cost of bringing land into cultivation under such circumstances is very much higher than would be the case if the land were nearer to a railway. Wherever we go throughout the country, we have an opportunity of viewing such land and we have the opportunity of appreciating that fact on train journeys throughout the State, for in travelling we pass mile after mile in the aggregate, of land which is absolutely unutilised.

Mr. Pickering: Where was that?

Mr. SAMPSON: I am sorry that the Bill does not embrace the features I desire, and surely what I have advocated is in the best interests of the State! However, the Bill does aim at doing something and I shall sup-

port the second reading. It is a disappointment to me, because I had hoped from the statements I have heard since I have been in the House, that a genuine effort to force these unutilised and unproductive lands into use, would have been made by the Government.

Mr. LATHAM (York) [8.43]: I support the Bill and although it is not one such as members would have liked to see before them, it is a step in the right direction. When it has been read a third time, it will commend itself more to most hon. members. I hope the Premier will make provision regarding the board of valuers, so that someone in the district where the land resumptions are to be made, will be appointed to that tribunal. Such a person will have some knowledge of the land in that district. There is provision for expert advisers, such as financial officials and representatives of the Lands and Surveys Department, but those officers do not know a great deal about the utility of the land itself in particular districts. I would suggest that he get a nomination from the local governing body for the particular district and that the appointee be made available at a fee whenever it is necessary for the board to sit. It would not be very costly, and would meet the requirements of the measure. I congratulate the Premier on the alternatives provided in the Bill. I do not think any other Act of Parliament provides alternatives such as this one does. Provision is made for subdividing and also for the treble tax. A lot has been said by members of the Opposition regarding the treble tax. It will be quite easy to amend the Bill so that there shall be a treble tax. We can provide that Section 17 of the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act shall not apply to land declared under this Act to be required for resumption. Dealing with the tax, there is nothing to prevent us from providing that no exemptions at all shall be allowed. Land once set aside and declared by the board under the Act to be required, should be put beyond the pale of all the exemption clauses under the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act. I suggest to the Premier that, instead of adopting the proposed provision referring to compensation, the section in the New Zealand Act should be adopted. It states that the unimproved value of the land shall be deemed to be the amount on which the unimproved value is assessed in the district valuation roll. I read that to mean the value which the owner himself has put on the land for taxation purposes. In the Taxation Department there is a valuation on a man's property and the valuation is put on it by the man himself. I would even go so far as to say that the value should be the value for taxation plus 10 per cent., and that on this value the resumption should be made. There could be no injury to anyone under such a provision, because

a man whose land was not brought under this measure would have the exemptions provided under the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act. In this State at present there is a great inclination to keep land values down. I consider this is a step in the wrong direction. The other day a gentleman and I had a look at a block of land and, after assessing the value of the improvements, he asked me what I thought the land was worth. I replied that I thought £2 10s. an acre. He said, "We will see how the rates are." We got the rate book from the road board office and found that the value of that block was 12s. 6d. an acre. It was freehold.

The Minister for Works: That is a matter of opinion.

Mr. LATHAM: Yes, but it does not look nice when you tell a man land is worth £2 10s. or £3 to find that it is valued at only 12s. 6d. an acre.

The Minister for Works: But that would be the land in its unimproved state.

Mr. Underwood: Could you get more if you sold it?

Mr. LATHAM: Yes, we could get for all our land more than the values shown in the local governing body's books or shown in the Taxation Department's records.

Mr. Davies: Is not that common with all road boards?

Mr. LATHAM: Yes, but it is a bad practice. There should be no objection to putting the value somewhere nearer the mark and decreasing the rate struck. If we make provision in this measure, as suggested by the Premier, that the land be trebly rated, and if we have power to resume on the valuation of the owner, there will be a possibility of getting better values shown in our books than is the case to-day. I hope the Premier will take into consideration the section of the New Zealand Act which deals with resumption under their closer settlement law. I also want to see provision made in this Bill for sufficient land being retained for a man's family. There might be a family of young children and, when resumptions are being made, sufficient land should be reserved for them.

The Premier: He can keep all he is utilising.

Mr. LATHAM: So long as that is so, I shall be satisfied. I do not want this measure to be made the means for unloading a lot of useless property on to the Government. The State cannot afford to indulge in this kind of thing, and it cannot afford to have locked up along the railways the valuable land that to-day is locked up. Some of the land in the York electorate is not wheat land. It is more valuable as dairying land, and I hope this will be brought under the provisions of the measure.

The Minister for Works: You propose that the Government should tell a man how to farm his land?

Mr. LATHAM: Yes, if necessary.

Mr. UNDERWOOD (Pilbara) [8.52]: I intend to support the Bill. Unlike other members, I am not very much disappointed in connection with the Bill because, knowing the position fairly well as regards available land in Western Australia, I do not think that the Bill is required at all. I had some experience of repurchased estates and found that the Government had purchased estates which remained on their hands for years. It was not a question of getting land to put the settlers on, but a question of getting settlers to go on the land. I could mention quite a number of estates. The Yandanooka estate was a fairly large one. When I was last a member of Cabinet, we were still arguing about that. When I was in the Scaddan Government we were trying to sell it. When I was in the Lefroy Government we were still trying to sell it. I remember also that we had the Bowes estate near Geraldton and the Narra Tarra estate, and I can well remember a deputation coming to me and requesting that the Government reduce the rent. We were told that the settlers could not possibly pay the amount at which the land had been sold, and it was reduced. I remember also the Harvey estate. In 1916 I travelled down the Bunbury line. We had a number of unemployed at that time and I was looking for work for them. I found that we had about 30,000 acres of Government land in the vicinity of the Bunbury line. There were 2,000 or 3,000 acres at Burrekup. It looked good land and if the member for Coolgardie were here I would sell it to him now. We cleared about 1,000 acres of land at Harvey. It was some of the cheapest clearing ever done in the State and it was well done.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: It has grown up since.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Yes. We cleared it at something like £4 10s. an acre. It was mostly done by unemployed. After it was cleared, it remained unoccupied and the scrub grew up again. It looked good land and the experts, Mr. O'Connor and Mr. Moody both told me it was good land, but still no one would take it.

The Premier: It is taken up now.

Mr. Munsie: It was not taken up because the Government were asking £12 an acre for it.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: We were not asking anything approaching that. We were not asking even £6 an acre for it. Still, we got no applicants for it.

Mr. Munsie: You did not make it known that it was available at £6 an acre or you would have soon got rid of it. I made several applications while you were Minister, and could not get a block for less than £12 an acre.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: The hon. member could have got it for a lot less than that.

Mr. Munsie: I did not want it for myself but for others.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: If anyone wants to buy land at present, there are some apparently fairly cheap places.

Mr. Pickering: Quite so.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I have heard of several places for sale, and it seems to me that the sellers must be losing money on them.

Mr. Pickering: So they are.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: There were members of this House, including myself, who took up wheat lands and almost everyone of them lost money. The latest information I had was that there were about 700 forfeited farms on the Agricultural Bank. With that number of farms on the Agricultural Bank, do we want to be buying more? I am putting these facts before members that they may not be led away by the exuberance of verbosity. There are facts to be considered. Anyone who wants land can get it in the vicinity of a railway. The member for Forrest (Mr. O'Loughlen) spoke about filling up the great empty spaces around Darling Harbour in Sydney and about closer settlement in the slums, and the building of flats not with merely a ground floor but three or four storeys high.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Taxation methods have led to that.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: These slums were resumed by the New South Wales Government and not by the municipal council.

Mr. O'Loughlen: You are wrong. The whole resumption was made by the city council.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I find that I have made miscalculations and I think other members are doing likewise. I was under the impression that a progressive land tax would break up the big estates. The Federal Government introduced a fairly solid progressive land tax some 10 years or more ago but it has not broken up the big estates.

Mr. Lutey: They still have the exemption.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: An exemption of £5,000 but a £5,000 estate is not a big estate. The Act has not broken up the £50,000 estate. The exemption of £5,000 makes no difference. There are many large estates still existing in the East. The member for York referred to the road board valuations. I am sure large numbers of people in this State would be prepared to sell their land at the value placed upon it by the road board. I had a small place, and I sold it at considerably less than the road board valuation. It was in the best part of the wheat belt.

Mr. O'Loughlen: You sold it two years too soon.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Possibly I sold it just in time. Members cannot expect too much from the Bill. I do not think that at present, with our huge area of land and our sparse population, we shall get any very great settlement by legislation. Until we have people looking for land, it is not of much use making that land available. I do not think the Bill will have any influence. This is the 47th board we have appointed this

session, and I trust the Premier will see to it that the board does not cost too much. In my opinion it will cost infinitely more than the value we shall get from the Bill.

Mr. RICHARDSON (Subiaco) [9.1]: After the eloquent speeches we have heard from time to time regarding unimproved land values taxation as being the best method of bringing vacant land into production, I feel disappointed that the Premier, in bringing down a Bill for closer settlement, has not made some effort to bring that system of taxation into operation. Still, he is to be congratulated on his courage in bringing down a Bill of this description. While the principle is right, yet in my opinion the methods to be employed in doing what we desire, namely, the breaking up of unused estates along the railway lines, are practically wrong. The Bill looks to be an innocent little measure, but there are in it points worthy of consideration. I agree entirely with the remarks of the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) when he says the triple tax will not be paid. I have gone carefully into the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act of 1907 and, reviewing the Bill, I am of opinion that anyone who desires to do so will be able to escape the triple taxation. That being really the only penal clause in the Bill, the land owners will be in the same position as they are to-day. Apparently the Premier has brought down this measure in the belief that the triple tax will be paid. I hope that when in Committee the Premier will make the provision so stringent that no matter what happens the triple tax will have to be paid. At the present time a man can get out of it by paying his income tax and so evading his land tax. If there is no land tax to be paid, that man cannot be called upon to pay his triple tax.

The Premier: Oh, yes, he can.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I fail to see where that is provided. The member for North-East Fremantle dealt very fully with the question.

The Premier: He was wrong, too.

Mr. RICHARDSON: It remains for the Premier to prove that in his reply to the debate. One phase of the question which none of the speakers have touched upon is this: It is desirable that we shall bring into operation those lands abutting along our railways. It has been pointed out that practically half a million is going into the deficit each year by reason of the loss on the railways. If we can do anything to reduce that loss we shall be justified in doing it. The only reasonable method is by imposing an unimproved land tax to such an extent that the idle lands along the railways will be thrown on to the market. It is of no use bringing population here unless we have lands for them to settle upon, and those are the very lands we want. The member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood) was right when he

said we have much land available and that it could be easily settled if we had the population. But we require to get people settled near to railway lines, and so we must take steps to force the owners of the unused lands along the railways to sell. The Bill will make the Government the sellers of that land. In my opinion we are not justified in doing that if there be some other means of selling that land to the men who desire to farm it. If an unimproved land tax were placed on those unused lands some of the holders would pay the tax. It must be remembered that would help meet the deficit on the railways. Other holders, who could see no sense in paying the tax without reaping any reward from the land, would sell their land to those who desired to buy it.

Mr. Harrison: It would require a very large tax to do that.

Mr. RICHARDSON: We should be justified in imposing very heavy taxation. Those lands were taken up for speculative purposes, and if the owners will not utilise them we are justified in taxing them clean off the land. However those people would be agreeable to selling their land to any farmer who wanted it, and the Government would be relieved of the financial responsibility of handling the land, and so would not have to wait 25 or 30 years for the repayment. Immediately the buyer of the land took it over and improved it he would escape the taxation.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: There would be no tax at all.

Mr. RICHARDSON: None except the existing land tax. It seems to me we are compelled to vote for the Bill because there is nothing better offered to us. To my thinking it is not a good Bill, notwithstanding which I must vote for it. I am surprised that, in view of the expressions of feeling in this House from time to time, the Premier has not brought down a Bill imposing unimproved land values taxation.

Mr. Piesse: You want confiscation.

Mr. RICHARDSON: Nothing of the sort. We want the owners of the land to use it or allow others to use it. The Government should not be responsible for the sale of this land if there be other means of compelling the owners to sell it direct to those who want to farm it. Under the Bill the Government will be taking on a big responsibility. The member for York rightly said he did not want the Government to be loaded up with all these lands. What is going to happen if the Bill be passed? In consequence of the triple taxation a large number of land owners will offer their land for sale, and the Government will be compelled to take it from them and probably hold it for years.

Mr. Money: The Government will not handle it unless it is required.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I am suspicious of a Bill which gives the Government power to take over all those lands. It has been done in the past and, according to the member for

Pilbara, those lands are still held by the Government.

Mr. Harrison: They are all gone now.

Mr. RICHARDSON: Then it is only quite recently. If there are other legitimate means whereby the land can be forced into operation without passing to the Government at all, it is the duty of the Government to see that the taxpayers are not saddled with that incubus. I believe that by means of an unimproved land values taxation those lands would be gradually brought into operation. The owners would either use them or sell them to farmers. In the meantime we would be reaping a revenue by means of the tax.

The Premier: What about the man without money who wants to go on the land? He is in the majority.

Mr. RICHARDSON: We still have plenty of Crown lands open for selection.

Mrs. Cowan: But not adjacent to a railway.

Mr. RICHARDSON: We have to bring unto cultivation those lands along the railways, and the proper way to do it is by imposing unimproved land values taxation. I hope that, before the Bill goes through, the Premier will agree to embody that principle in it. It would work out to the best interests of the State, relieve the Government of a great deal of financial responsibility and be of benefit generally. I intend to vote for the second reading because, as I have already said, we have nothing better offering, but I hope the Premier will agree to amend the Bill in Committee.

Mr. SIMONS (East Perth) [9.14]: Those members who were returned to advocate closer settlement stimulated by an unimproved land tax, are somewhat disappointed with the measure submitted.

The Premier: There is plenty of land tax—Federal, State and local authority.

Mr. SIMONS: But not enough to break up big estates. While this measure does not fully satisfy those of us who feel that there is a land hunger waiting to be met, yet we have to accept it because there is nothing better offering. The measure has this merit, that whilst it will not take us as far along the road of progressive settlement as we would wish, it will still take us a sufficient part of the way to warrant our support. Every Government, no matter what party it originates from, should be supported in its legitimate effort to turn our unutilised acres into productivity. There is nothing more necessary in Australia than this. It is useless to talk of attracting people unless accessible areas are provided for those whom we invite here. I do not believe any of us would seriously subscribe to a policy of confiscation. While many of us may be envious of some of the big land holders of this country, in all fairness and in all reason, the nation must recognise the hardships which have been suffered by the early pioneers. We must also realise that members of the families

of those pioneers are deserving of some consideration at the hands of the State. Great and heroic battles have been fought in the past, which very few of us in this House have ever been called upon to face. We would be a basely ungrateful community if we did not recognise some rights on the part of the families whose forebears have gone out into the wilderness and helped to make this a habitable country.

Mr. Troy: Even to the third and fourth generation.

Mr. SIMONS: Having conceded that right, we have to ascertain some way in which we can protect the rights of those people who have kept the country in a stagnant condition. The Bill is deserving of support because it will carry us part of the way in that direction. It should be the function of every Government to provide facilities for those citizens who have the instinct to go upon the land, and to cater and make provision for the man who has in his heart the ambition and desire in the words of the poet, "To see a home 'mid acres widely sown, and call the smiling landscape all his own." That expresses a wonderful creative instinct, and an ambitious desire which it should be the duty of every member of Parliament to help to satisfy. I believe we all subscribe to the doctrine that this great unpeopled country of ours cannot be held by the white race unless we can get more of our own kind into it. We have to support every measure that will tend towards that end. There has been a good deal of talk about a million farms for a million farmers in Australia. While many people may believe that is a rather high-falutin scheme, I say it has much to commend it. If we aim big, we shall get somewhere, but if we aim low, we shall hit nothing. This Bill is not the big healthy, robust child we might have expected, but a weakling though it is, it will go a little way towards the ideal of a million farms. If we view the land history of the State and note what has happened along some of the oldest of our railway lines, we find that big land areas have been locked up and held by a few people. Something must be done to bring them into productivity. Because this measure will go a part of the way, it is our duty to support it. To-night we have been given examples of two big areas which were bought in the vicinity of Geraldton some years ago. I would not like to see the policy of land resumption judged by the experience of properties which are far remote from the markets and far away from the confines of civilisation. This Bill may throw into use lands which are within 100 miles of the city of Perth. We must not in our ideas of land settlement ever minimise the derogatory influence that distance exercises against the extension of development throughout Western Australia. Take the case of a couple who are asked to go out, perhaps 200 miles

away from Perth, and to take a young family to be reared in those outback places. We cannot blame them if they hesitate. Outside a distance of 100 miles from the city, there is a zone which is beyond the highest medical attention that should be available in case of a grave family crisis. The thought of going so far away from the big centres of population is enough to deter anyone. The family would be so far removed from immediate skilled medical attention that this in itself would constitute a deterrent to land settlement. If we can bring into use some of the areas in Toodyay or the Pinjarra districts by a measure of this kind, we shall be doing a great service to the country.

Mr. Munsie: You will not get much land at Pinjarra.

Mr. SIMONS: I think there is a good deal of fine land there. A measure such as this will give a new lease of life to some of those places which for 60 years or more have been nothing more than villages which have remained undeveloped for decades.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: We will take up a block.

Mr. PIESE (Toodyay) [9.20]: I feel that this Bill is all that Parliament can be asked to pass. It will give the Governor power to acquire estates when they are in a position to purchase them. There is a wrong conception on the part of members in regard to the holders of big estates. My impression is that they think it is their intention to hold these estates at all costs. I have spoken to the owners of fairly large estates adjacent to a railway, and the objection they have to subdividing them is that people will buy those sections of the property that are in the midst of the holding and leave a large proportion of the land on the hands of the sellers. The Government can take the risk of selling the balance of the property if they acquire estates, though I feel sure that a good deal of those properties will remain on their hands for some time. There is not the great land hunger that some people imagine. I know of a fairly large area which has been offered for sale in vain.

Mr. Pickering: At very good prices too.

Mr. PIESE: At a reasonable price, and the land is fairly well improved. There is some land out to the north of Toodyay which is of great value and is very suitable for closer settlement. There is no desire on the part of people to purchase that land.

Mr. Willcock: Surely!

Mr. PIESE: Let the Government take up one estate on trial. I feel sure that a fairly large proportion even of this estate would be left on their hands. Not every estate is suitable for closer settlement. This has been shown in other instances where the Government have repurchased estates, and a proportion of them have been left on their hands for a considerable period. The proper method of increasing settlement is by holding more railways. There is an area of a quarter of a million

acres in my electorate, highly suitable and offering at a tithe of the cost that the Government can purchase other estates for. If they purchase the freehold of land it will cost the new settler at least £4 or £5 an acre to take it over. I could show the Government thousands of acres of land in the northern portion of my electorate where land very similar to it has yielded 30 bushels to the acre. All that it needs is water and railway communication. It is no use leaving large areas like this unoccupied for lack of proper facilities. If the Government have the money with which to repurchase estates, they must have the money with which to build railways to more profitable areas. If estates which are lying adjacent to the railways, some of which are only partially improved and others highly improved, are purchased, there are not the people in the State ready to take them up at their true market value. Until both money and people arrive here, it will not pay the Government to take up too many of these estates. I see nothing wrong with the Bill, which gives power to the Government to acquire freehold estates when necessary.

Mr. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [9.26]: In view of what happened at the recent elections I think that the Government have a mandate from the country to bring in a Bill to provide for an unimproved land values tax. Possibly they have introduced the Bill now before us in place of the other system in order to interpret the feeling of the House. It was a disappointment to most members that the Government took this means of bringing our idle land into use. If a vote were taken on the question whether this Bill should be passed, or whether another Bill should be introduced initiating the policy of unimproved land values taxation, there would be no doubt that the latter Bill would have the majority vote. I do not think the necessity for this Bill is so apparent as it has been in the Eastern States. Had a Labour Government introduced it, even in its mildest form, it would have been howled at by the Tory Press, and they would have referred to it as being a method of confiscation. There is nothing much of a confiscatory nature about the Bill.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They would have had us pay to the very last penny.

Mr. WILLCOCK: It would have been used as a big stick with which to beat the Labour dog. In New South Wales and Queensland, when similar Bills were brought in, people went to the extent of decrying the value of the land of those States from the loan point of view merely because the Governments had introduced Bills of that description. This Bill is an admission on the part of the Government, just as the Soldier Settlement Bill was an admission, that they have not large areas of Crown lands available near existing railways.

Mr. Munsie: We are told there are 3,000 acres at Burrekup.

Mr. WILLCOCK: There is quite a satisfactory explanation for the views put forward by the member for Pilbara in regard to the taking up of land during the years that he was a member of the Lefroy and Scaddan Governments. At that time nearly all our men were away at the war. There was no immigration and no inducement to people to come here.

Mr. Mann: That does not apply to the Scaddan Government.

Mr. Munsie: There was none of that land acquired until after the war.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Had the war not taken place that land would not have been idle for nearly so long as it was. As soon as the war was over and our soldiers returned it was rapidly taken up. There is very little of the land cleared under those conditions that is available for settlement. Contrary to the views expressed by the member for Toodyay (Mr. Piesse) I think there is a good demand for the land.

Mr. Mann: Is not that an argument in favour of the Bill?

Mr. WILLCOCK: Yes, but the hon. member has practically given reasons why the Bill is unnecessary. I say the measure is absolutely necessary and it is necessary to go further than the Bill contemplates.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is the only thing that is wrong with the Bill.

Mr. Munsie: The resumption clause is wrong.

Mr. Pickering: Is the trouble that there is not sufficient taxation?

Mr. WILLCOCK: I am not particularly keen on the taxation aspect, although I gave the lead to the Government regarding a Bill the other night.

Mr. Pickering: Do you want confiscation?

Mr. WILLCOCK: Certainly I do not want confiscation. If the South Australian Government had introduced a Bill like the one under discussion, there would have been a squeal regarding confiscation. However, as the Premier has brought in the Bill, as one hon. member put it by way of interjection, "all is well." I regard the Bill as an admission by the Government that there is not much Crown land close to the railways that is available for land settlement. I saw in a propaganda pamphlet issued in connection with the movement for a million people for a million farms, that there are two million acres of good agricultural land in Western Australia. If there are two million acres offering, it is a pity that those people do not come here and show the Premier where it is, for it would be dealt with pretty soon.

Mr. Pickering: In any case, it is a good advertisement for the State.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I do not think so. It is untrue, and it is no good spreading inaccurate statements regarding Western Australia.

Mr. Pickering: It is truer than you imagine.

Mr. WILLCOCK: If it is true, it is strange that there are men who want land to-day and

cannot get it. If Crown lands are available, there is no necessity for the Bill.

Mr. Pickering: The land to which the Bill applies is adjacent to the railways and the railways are not paying.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I am speaking about the land close to the railways. The trouble with Western Australia is that we have more railways than we can profitably employ. In a State where we have a mile of railways for every 70 or 80 people, it is ridiculous to advocate extensions of railways to other parts of the State.

Mr. Piesse: Do you want the people to open up the country first?

Mr. WILLCOCK: That has been the policy in the past and if we build railways past good land held by people this Bill endeavours—inadequately, I contend—to cope with, we will be building railways all our lives. I hope that “improvements” under the Act will not be taken to mean that if a man has a fence around his property that will be regarded as sufficient improvement.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: It would all depend upon the quality of the land.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I hope provision will be made that the land must be used to its full productive value. There are 50,000 or 100,000 acres of land along the Midland railway which at present are used for grazing purposes, but which can be used to greater advantage.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Do you not think that the Midland Company would jump at an opportunity under the Bill and take advantage of arbitration?

Mr. WILLCOCK: Sufficient has been said to-night regarding the method of acquiring land, and I have no doubt that the suggestion that the owner should place the value upon his land, at which price his property can be resumed plus a certain amount for disturbance, will meet with the approval of most hon. members.

Mr. Pickering: But in this instance, it is a case of the board's valuation, not the owner's valuation.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I would prefer that the value should be made by the owner first. There would be nothing unfair about that. The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) has given the House instances regarding the compulsory acquisition of land.

Mr. Piesse: But you believe in arbitration?

Mr. WILLCOCK: Certainly I do.

Mr. Munsie: But not arbitration under the Public Works Act.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I have seen too much land resumed to believe in such arbitration. I know that when land was resumed for railway construction purposes in Geraldton, a fabulous value was placed upon it by the owner, and three or four times the value of that land was finally given to the owner of that property. At Midland Junction land was resumed for the shunting yards and the owner placed about ten times its real value upon it. When the matter went to arbitration,

I think that particular person got at least three or four times more than he originally anticipated. I want to make the Bill apply to our Murchison pastoral areas, and to do that, I think we should amend it to make it apply to land within 25 miles of our railways.

Mr. Angelo: You cannot touch pastoral leases; that is settled.

Mr. WILLCOCK: We cannot touch anything until we pass a law to that effect.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Why not touch pastoral leases and yet touch other leases?

Mr. Mann: It is getting nearer home in that instance.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It should apply all round.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I hope the Bill will be amended in the direction I suggest, because if there is any place in Western Australia where closer settlement can be brought about with distinct advantage to people going on the land, to the railways of the State, and to the State generally, it is in the Murchison pastoral areas. There is a population of from 100 to 200 who are interested in blocks in that part of the State. If the land were compulsorily resumed, it would support a population of at least five times that number. It was all right in the first instance when the land grants were made, or when leases were taken up, because there were no railways, comparatively no improvements, water difficulties to contend with and fencing difficulties, and in such circumstances the Government were able to grant large areas. Now we have some 300 miles or so of railways through this particular land, and it is only fair that we should have an opportunity of applying the Bill to those areas. The land in that part of the State is comparatively easy to improve, so that large herds and flocks of sheep can be run. The stock that can be run is considerably in excess of that provided under the present Land Act, which is almost ridiculous. I am confident that the Murchison areas will lend themselves successfully to a closer settlement policy. I would like to see the Bill amended so that the areas held may be considerably reduced, and that million acre holdings will be cut up. At the present time these areas are not carrying a large population, and if they were subdivided they could easily supply five or ten times the number at present there.

The Premier: It did not support them very well last year?

Mr. WILLCOCK: Principally because the land has not been improved. Settlers there can get water at practically any spot they desire, and if there is only one well to every 150 or 160 thousand acres or so, it is not to be wondered at that when the grass around those wells has been eaten off, the sheep cannot exist. Improvements must be carried out in order to bring the land into its full productivity. I hope the provisions of the Bill will be considerably altered in the direction I have indicated.

Mr. Mann: Are they not afraid to go ahead with their improvements, because of the droughts in the Murchison area?

Mr. WILLCOCK: Even taking the droughts into consideration, it is much easier to look after a small holding and give personal attention to it, than to look after a big area.

Mr. Mann: But is not that the reason why they are afraid of over-stocking?

Mr. WILLCOCK: If the settlers there improved their land so as to carry the stock better, it would be in the interests of the pastoralists themselves. Some attempt should be made to amend the Bill so that land may be more easily acquired. The majority of the House, I think, will be in favour of the New Zealand provision for land being acquired on the basis of the owner's valuation placed upon it for taxation purposes, plus a certain amount for disturbance. I hope the Premier will agree to the amendments in the direction I have suggested. If he does, not only will the population in those areas increase, but the railway revenue will benefit by a considerable amount annually. I support the Bill, not because I am enthusiastic regarding the measure, but because nothing better is offered.

Mr. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [9.42]: I support the second reading of the Bill, although I regard it as too moderate in its incidence. I would like to see a measure introduced to enable the Government to acquire land which has been only partially improved, as, for instance, ring-barked.

The Premier: This will do that.

[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]

Mr. ANGELO: The member for Geraldton (Mr. Willcock) has stated that some of our lands constitute too valuable an asset to be left in the present state. There are large areas adjoining the railways in the South-West which are only running a few hundred sheep. There is plenty of land in other parts of the State where sheep can be depastured, and we want all this good land, especially in the South-industry, such as dairying or intense culture. It is nonsense to say there is no land available for settlement in the South-West. On the many trips I have taken from Perth to Bunbury, good lands have been pointed out to me by my fellow passengers and they have acknowledged that the reason those areas are held up is that they are owned by people in large holdings.

Mr. Munsie: Do you know where that 3,000 acres of Government land is down there?

Mr. ANGELO: The member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) says that land there requires a big outlay for drainage. That may be so, but if that land were more closely settled, the cost of drainage would be spread over a large number of land holders instead of being borne by a very few. Some of us had an

opportunity of seeing what closer settlement really means when we visited Kendenup. Last year that estate of 50,000 acres had five people living on it. To-day, within the space of 12 months, the number of settlers has already increased to 500.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: Taxation did not do that.

Mr. ANGELO: No; but the possibility of acquiring good land enabled that to be done. In my opinion, we have better land than the Kendenup country within 50 miles of Perth; but it is impossible for the Government or anyone else to settle that land while it is being held in large areas. Compare Pinjarra with Kendenup! The difference is too great to be grasped easily. At Kendenup one sees a hive of industry, created within 12 months, while Pinjarra, a place founded 70 years ago, is still the same humdrum sleepy hollow that it was 20 years ago. The Bill will do good in enabling the Government to acquire some land for closer settlement. The question has been asked here, what is the good of land without settlers? But we have settlers offering. A visit to Kendenup will show numbers of miners from Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie settled, or about to settle, there. The Leader of the Opposition has said that his constituency is gradually walking away to Kendenup. It shows that the miners whose occupation on the goldfields is disappearing are looking for agricultural opportunities in the South-West. We all know what the history of Ballarat and other large mining fields in the Eastern States has been. Fortunately those mining centres had good agricultural land around them, and so the miners, when mining was done, started agriculture. Here, unfortunately, we have not that good land around Kalgoorlie, though we have it not far from Kalgoorlie.

Mr. Munsie: We have around Kalgoorlie land equal to or better than the land in the South-West; but it lacks a rainfall. Still, it is very good pastoral land.

Mr. ANGELO: Yes; but only a few people, comparatively, can live on the pastoral industry in the neighbourhood of the goldfields. Still, the others can easily find a livelihood in the great South-West. We know that these big holdings exist, and this Bill should go a considerable way towards breaking them up. If the Bill does not answer our expectations after a trial of 12 months or two years, it will be easy to introduce another measure more comprehensive. The member for Geraldton (Mr. Willcock) suggests extending the powers of the Bill to the Murchison. If those powers mean the purchasing of land at a fair valuation to be fixed by a board, I think the Murchison people would be willing to sell their stations. The same remark applies to the Gascoyne. Station properties are in the market every day. I could show the member for Perth (Mr. Mann) a dozen stations on the Gascoyne now under offer.

Mr. Mann: But they are only leasehold.

Mr. ANGELO: Yes, but there are improvements on them, and the improvements have to be provided for. While the station owners themselves might be prepared to sell, I doubt whether it would be a sound proposition to settle people on limited areas of the Murchison country. As we know, the Murchison land will carry only a sheep to 15 acres.

Mr. Mann: That is unimproved land, is it not?

Mr. ANGELO: No; improved land on the Murchison will carry only a sheep to 15 acres. If a drought comes along, what then? I know a man on the Murchison who four years ago had 40,000 sheep but now, as the result of drought, has only 12,000. However, he had plenty of room, and thus was able to save those 12,000 sheep. It is only by working on big lines that a man can cope with the losses resulting from drought. The small man is ruined by the very first drought. That is why, although I am always in favour of closer settlement, I urge that closer settlement should be restricted to areas where it can be effected with the best prospects of success. The member for Geraldton talked about stations of one million acres. There may be one station of that size on the Murchison, but most of the stations there comprise only 200,000 or 300,000 acres, which I consider to be the minimum acreage a station holder can hold with safety in this industry. I welcome the measure, and I repeat that we ought to give it a trial of a year or two, after which, if necessary, a more comprehensive measure can be introduced.

Mr. LUTEY (Brownhill-Ivanhoe) [9.53]: I have been looking forward with much expectancy to this Bill, my anticipation being that the Government would bring down a measure of real value to the country. We have often heard it stated that unimproved land values taxation is necessary in this country, not only for revenue purposes, but for breaking up the big estates. After the able advocacy of the "West Australian" for some two years past, I thought the Government would introduce something tangible. But I am grievously disappointed with this Bill, and shall vote against the second reading. The measure, if passed, will compel the Government to go further and resume estates. I take it the Government intend to settle people on the large unused estates, which means that a considerable amount of borrowed money will be spent in getting the people settled. Thus we shall be going over the same old ground of years back, creating extra unearned increment for the surrounding estates. The introduction of an unimproved land values tax would place the burden on the right shoulders, and, further, would bring into use vacant lands, thus vastly benefiting the people as a whole.

Mr. Pickering: What tax would you suggest?

Mr. LUTEY: I should say, at least 6d. in the pound; but I do not suppose the hon. member interjecting would agree to that. The

member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo) mentioned that the people of Ballarat and Bendigo in the early days found themselves with good lands adjoining those mining fields. I happen to be a native of Bendigo, and therefore know something of the conditions which prevail. I know that most of the good lands adjacent to those goldfields was held by a few individuals. The people who are to blame for the position of Australia as regards lack of population are the land monopolists, who selfishly held up the best of the land at a time the flow of population was coming to this continent. In the western districts of Victoria, for instance, some of the finest land in the world is held by a few people. There one could travel over 40 miles of railway running through some of the best land to be found anywhere, and see only a few sheep and cattle on either side of the line. At the very time the goldfields people of Victoria were looking for land, they were prevented by the land monopolists from settling in those rich districts. The miners anxious to take up land had to go into the northern areas, around Swan Hill, into the dry districts. It is a fact that for a period of something like 30 years the population in the western district of Victoria actually decreased—statistics show this—whereas population increased in the Victorian dry districts. Those miners never had the possibility of getting on decent land. Hundreds of those miners, had they then obtained access to the good lands of Victoria, would have brought out their friends and relations from the older countries, which would have made a vast difference to the population of Victoria. The position created in Victoria has been created here also. Instead of building new railways, which represent half the debt of this State, we should have utilised the land available alongside the then existing railways—land, moreover, in close proximity to the markets. A tax on unimproved land values would have meant that many of our later railways would not have been constructed. An unimproved land values tax was carried through this Chamber by a Labour Government but only to be rejected in another place. In the circumstances it was, perhaps, wise to build these newer railways. But now our railway system is not paying, owing to the forced unwisdom of our railway construction policy. Our greatest loss as a community arises from the operations of our Railway Department.

The Minister for Agriculture: But an unimproved land values tax will not bring more freight to the goldfields railways.

Mr. LUTEY: It might assist in settling some of the good pastoral land alongside the goldfields railways, where the only difficulty is the rainfall. Throughout Australia, however, the same position has been created. Going from Melbourne to Sydney, one finds alongside the railway a great deal of land in the same State as it was in 50

years ago—rung trees, and a few sheep running on the land. Euroa and other north-western towns of Victoria are to-day in a worse condition than that of 40 or 50 years ago. And still the good land of Victoria is being held up. The same state of affairs obtains there as in Western Australia and, in fact, throughout the rest of the Commonwealth. This is simply because Australia has never had a scientific system of land taxation. At the present day one finds sheep runs within nine miles of the city of Melbourne, being land held by speculators who are waiting for additional unearned increment to be created for them by the community. The land position throughout Australia constitutes a crying shame and a scandal. Australia's lack of population is owing simply to the unpatriotic refusal of large landholders to submit to a fair and just measure of taxation. We have men like Sir Joseph Carruthers and Lord Northcliffe telling us what we should do to attract population, that we should establish another million of farmers in Australia at once. Let the Government go the right way about it. I had expected that the Premier would come down with something adequate on this occasion. I had thought that the trip to the South-West would lead to the introduction of legislation which would make for the development of that country. If an unimproved land values tax had been imposed, I think there would have been very little difficulty to borrow sufficient money to do a vast amount of developmental work in that part of the State. If this Bill is passed, we shall continue in the same old merry-go-round fashion of the past, creating values which will put profits into the pockets of the land monopolists without achieving any real good for the people. In Victoria where estates have been repurchased and people settled, some of the land has got back again into a few hands. I intend to vote against the second reading of the Bill on the ground that the Government should have brought down a measure adequate to meet the situation. If the second reading is carried, I hope the Bill will be considerably improved in Committee. I repeat that I am profoundly disappointed with the Bill. I think those special interests which can always see further ahead than average people have had something to do with this Bill. The same people in my opinion are behind the Bill for the sale of the State Trading Concerns. There is the hidden hand that plays an important part in shaping affairs in Australia, and that hand I believe is behind this Bill. If the Premier had introduced a measure for the taxation of unimproved land values, I would have supported him in any proposition for a loan for the development of the South-West.

MR. COWAN (West Perth) [10.2]: Unlike the previous speaker, I wish to warmly

congratulate the Premier on having introduced this Bill.

Mr. LUTY: I expected that of you.

Mrs. COWAN: It is certainly a step in the right direction, and one which I think will give great satisfaction to the community at large. During the course of the election campaign, we heard a lot regarding the necessity for doing something in the way of taxing unimproved values. When we realise that this Bill will make it possible, without inflicting too great a hardship in different directions, to bring into use the land available in the South-West—

Mr. Munsie: But it will not do that.

Mrs. COWAN: And more particularly the land which is available in the districts between York and Beverley on the west, extending in an easterly direction to Dowerin, and then to Cunderdin and Quairading where according to the latest report of the Surveyor General, there are two and a half million acres within seven miles of a railway, the Premier has shown great courage in introducing the measure. For this he deserves the heartiest support of the House, and any support I can give him I certainly intend to give.

Mr. MUNSIE (Hannans) [10.4]: I intend to support the second reading of the Bill in the hope that the method for the resumption of land will be altered in Committee. With the member for West Perth, I give the Premier credit for introducing a Bill which is a step in the right direction, but with the member for North-East Fremantle, I am positive that the alterations which the measure will bring about in the method of resumption will mean that the Government will most likely be saddled with tens of thousands of acres of land, not the best and not the land we want, and at a price which will make it impossible to sell to other people at a figure at which they can make a living. Though I have searched the reports of the Public Works resumption board to find an instance of the board having given a fair valuation, I have not been able to find a solitary case. Yet there have been hundreds of resumptions. It was never intended that the provisions of the Public Works Act should be utilised for the resumption of land for farming purposes. This statute was intended for the resumption of land for public works, railways, workshops and things of that character. It was never intended for the purpose of resuming farm lands for closer settlement. Let me cite one instance in the metropolitan area. A man valued his land for taxation purposes at £1,000. The Government desired to resume it and he asked £10,000. Strange to say the board gave him £8,000. Possibly the land was worth £3,000 at the outside. If £3,000 was a fair value, the owner had been robbing the State of taxation on £2,000 a year. If the board's valuation was correct, he had been robbing the State of taxation

on £7,000 a year. A good deal has been said regarding the Pinjarra district. During the tour of the South-West, I had an opportunity to travel about Pinjarra and the neighbourhood. I admit that there is some very fine land on the river banks, but I honestly believe that for every 500 acres of first class land in this district there are 10,000 acres of sand worth not 10s. an acre. I was surprised to find so small an area of good soil.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We were taken to see the good land and were told that the bad land was not worth seeing.

Mr. MUNSIE: We must have been shown the bad land, because for two-thirds of the journey we were travelling through pure sand, similar to that of Perth. If there are many areas of that kind in and around Pinjarra and the Government force it into utilisation, they will probably be asked £2 10s., £3 or even £4 an acre for it and, to the man who settles on it to make a living, it will not be worth more than 10s.

Mr. Sampson: Much of that same class of land at Coolup is growing splendid vines.

Mr. MUNSIE: I have not seen it.

The Minister for Works: That is better land.

Mr. Sampson: We saw splendid fields of potatoes at Pinjarra.

Mr. MUNSIE: I admit that there is some very fine land, but there is an immense area of very poor land. I support the main principles of the Bill, but I hope the Premier will reconsider the method of resumption. If he does not do so, and the prices are fixed by the board who have fixed prices for land resumed under the Public Works Act, he will pay at least 50 per cent. more than the land is worth.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington) [10.10]: I regret very much that the visit to Pinjarra and the neighbourhood was so hurried that any member might easily have acquired wrong impressions. The member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) referred to vines. The place he must be referring to is that of Mr. J. N. Cox, on the banks of the Murray, which is splendid land for raisin culture, etc., and well farmed. I believe there is a great quantity of equally suitable land in the vicinity.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You could not beat Paterson's garden.

Mr. Munsie: That, too, is on the banks of the river.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is a lot of very fine land around Pinjarra and in fact right through the South-West, but with it there is other land grading downwards to a very poor quality indeed. When I wrote to the Pinjarra people I asked them to arrange to show us some of the best land, some medium quality and some poor land, and also some not cleared, so that members could form an idea of the work which had been undertaken by the predecessors of present day settlers. Members saw a very large area of land near the Pinjarra station all

cleared and cropped, with cattle and sheep grazing on it. If one saw that land in its virgin state covered with blackboy, red gum and banksia, he would realise that the pioneers must have had hearts of lions to carry on there. Under this Bill the system of valuation must be taken into account, and one factor which must not be overlooked is the cost of clearing the land to make it ready for the plough. On my farm, now being worked by my boys, some of the land has cost £30 an acre to clear. This land is unquestionably good, but how many settlers could start to clear, say, 100 acres at an average cost of even £15 an acre?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It does not cost that under the improved methods adopted to-day.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am speaking from experience.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That was the cost in the days when it had to be done by hand.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member has his opinion and may be correct. I have my opinion and am correct in the figures I have given regarding the cost of clearing in certain parts. I do not want members to form the opinion that all the places in the South-West are as good as those they saw. On the other hand, I will not permit anyone to run down the district. I believe that the district can carry a much larger population and that, if the new settlers are assisted by their neighbours, they will be able to make a decent living. Because one goes to a farm on a nice sunny day, and sees the host, the hostess and the children all looking nice and clean, and the table well laden, he must not think that that represents everyday life on a farm. If any member holds this opinion, all I can say is, "Have a try and you will find there is another side to it." Just the same, the land in Western Australia is all right, taken as a whole, and the people are all right. I have told my people at Pinjarra that if I could get the Premier's permission I should like to take a party down for a couple of days and show them around quietly. When we were there previously we had to rush around in motor cars. Some hon. members may be capable of taking a quick and accurate impression, but not all can do that. If I could conduct a party around quietly I could show them everything, and so on their return they would have an accurate knowledge of what the country is like and what it can produce.

Mr. HERON (Leonora) [10.16]: I take this opportunity to thank the Premier for having arranged the South-West trip. It was an eye-opener to me. I am a little disappointed with the Bill but, like the member for Hannans (Mr. Munsie), I will support the second reading with the object of trying to improve the Bill in Committee. While on that trip to the South-West I had a good look round and took particular care to learn all that I could, conversing with those on the land and getting their impressions. From all the local people I met I gained the opinion

that something should be done to bring into use the lands lying idle to-day. At Capel we had a pilot who knew the district thoroughly. He showed us everything there was to be seen in the time at our disposal, pointing out those who had developed their land and those who had not. One man who had been seven or eight years in the district had developed two properties in a most creditable manner. On the other hand we were shown the Ramsay property, containing thousands of acres, on which practically nothing had been done. Last year some ring-barking was carried out, but that was the first improvement effected. It seems grossly unfair to allow a man to continue holding his property undeveloped. That place was within a mile and a half of the railway siding. Our pilot took us to Clarke's property, now being cut up. It consists largely of land which until a little time ago was regarded as worthless. Owing to the rains there was a good deal of water about the place, and we came to one stretch of flood which effectively turned back the whole of the party except Mr. Ewing, of another place, and me. We crossed the water in order to see the remainder of the property. Until the present holder secured the land it was held to be third class. Nevertheless we saw subterranean clover two feet high, showing clearly what can be done with such land if properly worked. Our pilot told us there were in the South-West, right through from Elgin to Boyanup, thousands of acres of similar land still held by the Government. If that be true it is up to the Government to see whether that land could not be improved. At Warekup we saw a large estate which, up till 10 years ago, supported only two families. It has since been cut up, and at present from 200 to 300 persons are making good livings on it. Those who previously owned the land held so much of it that it kept them poor. On many occasions while down there I gained the impression that people had too much land. I will support the second reading, but I hope we shall be able to amend the Bill in Committee in such a way as to make it of use in breaking up large estates.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam—in reply) [10.22]: I did not expect the Bill to meet with the approval of every member of the House. I am glad to see that it has the approval of members on both sides. In any Bill it is very difficult to provide with absolute certainty for the rendering of land available for closer settlement. Things in New Zealand are not going on quite as members here seem to think. There an owner may retain 1,000 acres of first-class land, 2,500 acres of second-class land, and 5,000 acres of third-class land. In Queensland an owner may retain £10,000 worth of land, and in Victoria the limit is set at £6,000 worth. The Bill goes further than other legislation, whether of New Zealand, of Queensland, or of Victoria, because it says the land may be taken, no matter what its area may be. The Bill is not intended to im-

pose taxation. My friends opposite desire that we should increase the tax on unimproved land. I am disappointed in the member for Brown Hill (Mr. Lutey). He is most anxious to bring into effect unimproved land values taxation. I do not know how much he would like to see the people on the land paying. He overlooks the fact that land is already hit by a fairly stiff Federal tax, by taxation imposed by local authorities in order that the roads may be kept in condition for the hon. member's motor car, and hit in addition by State taxation. If the hon. member be not satisfied with those three taxes already imposed, and by the burden on the land of the increased Customs tariff, I should like to know what he thinks the farmer can stand. Already is the farmer taxed in every possible way. I am not seeking under the Bill to increase taxation; I merely wish to see land acquired for closer settlement. We require only the good land, because the land must be settled by men without means, and such men must have the very best of land if they are to make good. Wherever we settle men without means we select the best land available. There will be no holding of the resumed land by the Government, because sales will follow resumption.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The prices will be so high that the poor man will not be able to get land.

The PREMIER: That will not be so. I am surprised at the hon. member.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You will have no say in the prices.

The PREMIER: Oh, yes we shall have. I do not know whether the hon. member thinks we ought not to pay a reasonable price. We certainly will not pay more. The land to be secured under the Bill will be purchased at a reasonable price. It is certainly the cheapest land in Australia. All that we desire is to secure idle land adjacent to the railways and bring it into use. A private owner may subdivide and sell to another man who has money; but he cannot sell to the men we shall be dealing with, because unless they have money they cannot make improvements, and unless they have the deeds we cannot advance money to them for the making of improvements. Therefore if we are to achieve anything under the Bill we must have the power to buy.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You have that power now.

The PREMIER: And we must have the power to settle on the land men without means. All land settlement to-day is taking that form. Not one man in 20 is going on the land without help. Resumptions under the Bill will be wisely undertaken, and not too much will be paid for the land.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You will be buying a pig in a poke.

The PREMIER: Nothing of the sort. With some members the whole trouble is that the Bill is not a taxing measure. I should be very sorry for all the men on the land if it was a Land Values Taxation Bill, for I should

then be doing something which would make it impossible for the men to stay on the land.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Mr. Lutey: Such a tax would fall chiefly on the valuable city land, not on the farmers' land.

The PREMIER: The hon. member, when talking to city men says that such a tax would fall on the farmer, but when he talks to me he says it would fall on the city men. If it would fall on the city men it would be easy for them to pass it on. I prefer this system. If we must tax in order to get revenue, that is another matter.

Mr. Lutey: You do not want any extra revenue.

The PREMIER: Yes, we do.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—FACTORIES AND SHOPS.

Council's pressed requests.

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it pressed its requested amendments Nos. 1 and 2.

BILL—WORKERS' HOMES ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 3:

The PREMIER: I move an amendment—

That the following words be added "of which the sub-divisional allotments are not less than quarter of an acre in area."

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

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 11:

Mr. JOHNSTON: I think this refers to increasing the rate of interest. What is in the mind of the Government as to the current rate of interest when this Bill goes through?

The PREMIER: The lowest possible rate of interest will be charged.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I want it to be understood that this will only apply to new loans.

The PREMIER: Certainly.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 4—Amendment of Section 24:

Mr. PICKERING: Will this provision apply to the full extent to the Act? Under the Act £550 can be advanced. Is it proposed to increase that amount, and what will the terms be?

The PREMIER: We want power to erect fairly cheap dwellings in country centres, particularly small centres, in the South-West and the wheat belt.

Mr. Angelo: Not in the North?

The PREMIER: Not cheap ones. We have had some experience of building cottages on the Peel Estate. We built a good many at a time, and we have made people fairly comfortable for about £200. In the country we shall go up to about £250.

Mr. Johnston: Will these be put on 5-acre blocks?

The PREMIER: As far as possible. There are many people who would like such homes if they could get them at a reasonable price. It is our intention to erect some of these homes and sell them to the people who want them.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I move an amendment—

That the following words be added—and the Section is further amended by adding at the end of the Section—"Provided that no provision of this Section shall apply to or affect or govern or alter the provisions of Part III. of this Act."

We should not have the same position in connection with this Bill as we have had in the Government Railways Act. That Act provided for one thing, but because a clause dealing with an entirely different question occurred in another part of the Act it was made to apply to that question, when in the opinion of Parliament there was no such intention. My amendment will mean that the clause will only apply to Part IV. of the Workers' Homes Act and not Part III. We want to be quite definite so that people may know what the intention really is.

The PREMIER: The words proposed to be inserted are unnecessary, because the clause only applies to Part IV of the Act and it cannot be made to apply to Part III.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That was done in connection with the Railways Act.

The PREMIER: It was found to be clearly set out there, when that question was looked into. It is not intended to interfere with the existing leasehold blocks.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I know it is not your intention, but I want to make it clear in the Act.

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

Clause 5—Rate of interest:

Mr. McCALLUM: The Premier contends that the clause only provides for the rate of interest on new advances.

The Premier: I consulted the Solicitor General and he agrees that that is the position.

Mr. McCALLUM: The inclusion of the words "Prescribe rates for the time being" may be interpreted to mean that the Government may have two rates of interest operating at the one time.

The Premier: At one time interest may be 5 per cent., for the next year it may be 6 per cent., and so on.

Mr. McCALLUM: Does that mean that the money which was lent to people through the Workers' Homes Board at 5 per cent.—

The Premier: That will be 5 per cent. to the end of the deal. That is fixed by mortgage.

Mr. McCALLUM: But the amendment to the Act will override the mortgage.

The Premier: No, it will not do that. The repayments are made on the basis of the interest charged at the time the mortgage was fixed.

Mr. McCALLUM: I suppose the Solicitor General is right but I do not like it.

Mr. MUNSIE: The opening part of the clause is the one which I think gives power to the Government to charge the rate of interest, and it is under that part of the clause that the alteration in the rate may be brought about.

The Premier: I assure you, you are wrong.

Mr. MUNSIE: I do not dispute the intention of the Premier but he may not always be there. Under the Act as it stands now, the rate of interest is fixed at 5 per cent., but in the clause it says, "notwithstanding anything contained in this Act to the contrary," the Government may prescribe the rate of interest, and so on. There is nothing to prevent the Government from prescribing the rate of interest on the present lease at 7 per cent.

Mr. Piesse: But that applies to future business.

Mr. MUNSIE: If words to that effect were added, the position would be quite clear. It is said that the proposed amendment cannot override a mortgage, but I do not know what is the exact position. Then again, money is advanced at 5 per cent. and is repaid to the Workers' Homes Board. It is quite possible that the Government, when they receive back money which they borrowed at 5 per cent., will lend that money out again at 7 per cent., and thus become moneylenders.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I would not blame them for doing that.

Mr. MUNSIE: It is not part of the functions of the Government to act as moneylenders.

The Premier: We would not get enough back to do that.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is what they have been doing regarding the farmers for some time.

Mr. MUNSIE: The member for Williams-Narrogin drew attention to a similar position in connection with the Industries Assistance Board and I supported him in his protest. I do not think it was fair to the farmers to secure repayments of money originally borrowed at 5 per cent. and again lend it to farmers at 7 per cent.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I move an amendment—

That in line 4, after "advance," the words "made after the passing of the amending Act, 1921," be inserted.

There is a possibility that, notwithstanding anything contained in this part of the measure, some person, finding himself compelled by unfortunate circumstances to transfer his home to some other person, will not be able to transfer it on exactly the same conditions as he holds it. The Government might demand an increase of 2 per cent. in the rate of interest, and thus the person might become a considerable loser. I am unable to agree with the member for Hannans in his suggestion, which would put a stop to the erection of workers' homes.

The Premier: It is quite unnecessary to add the words.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Their addition will make the clause perfectly clear.

The PREMIER: As I have already told the Committee, the mortgages are fixed things. If a mortgaged property is transferred to another person, the transfer is subject to the existing mortgage, the terms of which cannot be altered.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: By legal enactment anything can be altered.

The PREMIER: I do not mind the words going in, but I do not wish the Committee to believe that the measure interferes with the rate of interest payable on any existing advance.

Mr. Munsie: The clause is badly worded; that is all.

The PREMIER: I will not oppose the amendment, though it is quite unnecessary.

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

New clause:

Mr. MacCallum SMITH: I move—

That the following be inserted to stand as Clause 6:—"23a. Any lessee under this part of the Act who has, under Section 18, received a certificate of purchase of the dwelling-house, shall be entitled, on the surrender of his lease to the Crown and on payment of the capital unimproved value of the land as appraised for the time being, to obtain from the Crown a grant of the land for an estate in fee simple."

The CHAIRMAN: Before the hon. member proceeds any further, I desire to point out to him that the proposed new clause is outside the scope of the Bill and outside the Title of the Bill. I rule the proposed new clause out of order.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

House adjourned at 10-57 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Friday, 9th December, 1921.

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