

tion that the total amount provided on the Loan Estimates and the Revenue Estimates will be expended. If the vote is not expended, a reduction will take place. It is a matter which will be adjusted at the end of the year on the basis of the proportion which will be expended from either Loan or Revenue Fund.

Vote put and passed.

[*The Speaker resumed the Chair.*]

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 12.9 a.m. (Friday)

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 2nd November, 1915.

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

SITTING HOUR, EXTENSION.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central): I move—

That for the remainder of the session the Council do meet for the despatch of business at three p.m. on all sitting days.

It is probable that the session will be brought to a close this week, and as is usual when the session is nearing the end, I am asking hon. members to meet at the

hour of 3 instead of at 4.30. It may not be necessary to call the House together at that hour, but it is as well to be prepared in the event of the necessity arising.

Question passed.

STANDING ORDERS SUSPENSION.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central): I move—

That for the remainder of the session so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable Bills to be taken through all stages at one sitting and Messages to be taken into consideration forthwith.

The Standing Orders in another place have been suspended and it is the customary procedure to follow when the session is about to draw to a close. The suspension of the Standing Orders facilitates the transaction of the business between the two Chambers.

Question passed.

BILL—PERMANENT RESERVE (No. 2).

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [4.35] in moving the second reading said: This is a short measure introduced for the purpose of excising from the class A reserve at Stirling Estate in the Capel district, that portion of the reserve contained in Lot 60 of the subdivision, containing 50 acres. For the information of members I may say that it has been discovered there is on this land a deposit of lime suitable for use in the manufacture of cement. A gentleman from South Australia interested in the manufacture of cement is at present in this State, and an application has been lodged for a special lease of this portion of the reserve, but while it is included in the class A reserve, that application cannot, of course, be considered. It is credibly stated that capital to the amount of £80,000 is available for the prosecution of the industry to be

established if the special lease applied for can be secured. No concession is asked for beyond the granting of the special lease, and seeing that the establishment of the proposed industry would be of considerable advantage to the State, and that the excision of the portion of the reserve mentioned in the Bill would not seriously reduce the area of the reserve, the Government have decided to submit the matter for the decision of Parliament. I think no further explanation is necessary in respect of this purely formal Bill. I have been informed by the Minister that if there are other applications for this particular reserve they will be duly considered.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Who is the Minister?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Mr. Angwin, but Mr. Johnson, the Minister for Lands, who is at present out of the State, has the matter in hand. I do not propose to take the Committee stage to-day, because members have not had an opportunity of seeing a map of the reserve and the portion that it is proposed to lease. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. E. M. CLARKE (South-West) [4.38]: This Bill comes upon us rather suddenly. I know something about this part of the State and what the settlers think of it. It is a serious matter to give away a valuable asset, such as it is proposed to do here, and I think the matter requires serious consideration. I hope the Minister will delay the passing of the Bill until we have been given more information. I know the country well and I would think twice before agreeing to grant a concession, such as is proposed, to any person.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan) [4.40]: In the case of giving away, as this means, a portion of any reserve, we must act with the greatest possible caution, and when it comes to giving away a portion of a reserve which has on it a valuable deposit, I think that the action of the Government is generous to the verge of foolishness. I should, at all

events, like to know a great deal more about the bona fides of the company the Colonial Secretary has referred to. I want to know something about the personality of the people who have approached the Government and any information there might be to give. It would have been better if the Minister had laid the plans on the Table of the House, and, indeed, any files which he may have dealing with the proposal. It would be far better to treat fairly and equitably those persons who first approached the Government, but, on the other hand, I do not think the Government should give away what might be a valuable asset to the first man who holds out his hand and asks for it. I do not oppose the second reading of the Bill, but I am in accord with the leader of the House that the Committee stage should not be taken to-day. We should have the opportunity of familiarising ourselves with the plans and also any papers which may be dealing with the question. If the Minister values the opinion of Parliament he should place before members the file of papers dealing with the application in order that members may have an opportunity of judging for themselves before they commit an act, which, after all, is an act of Parliament and not an act of Government.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN (South-East) [4.42]: I would like to know, if this Bill is passed, whether the Government contemplate submitting a subsequent Bill to authorise the lease to the proposed manufacturer of cement. Is that the intention of the Government, or is it intended that this simple Bill providing for the taking of a piece of land out of a class A reserve, will be regarded by the Government as sufficient authority for the giving of the lease?

The Colonial Secretary: I think so, under the Land Act.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: Why are the Government departing from the usual practice in regard to leases? This House during the past two sessions has been asked to authorise two or three special leases. That is the proper course of pro-

cedure. I do not think under cover of a little Bill of one clause which provides for the taking of a piece of land out of a class A reserve, that the Government should consider that it is authorised to treat with some private person for any lease it likes. Would it not be better even now to embody in this Bill authority for the proposal? I would object to the taking of a piece of land out of class A reserve and leaving it to the Minister or the department to do the rest. That would be utterly wrong, and seeing that the Government have taken a different course in regard to other leases, it would be well for the Minister now to have this debate adjourned and get the proposed lease submitted as an additional clause and to let the House deal with the complete proposal in one Bill.

On motion by Hon. E. McLarty debate adjourned.

BILL—MINES REGULATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Assembly's Message.

Message received from the Assembly stating that it agreed to the alternative amendment made by the Council to amendment No. 1, that it did not insist on its further amendment to the Council's amendment No. 4 and that it no longer disagreed with amendment No. 6.

BILL — INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT AMENDMENT.

Assembly's Message.

Message received from the Assembly stating that the amendments requested by the Council had been made.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 20th October; Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair, the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Title:

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

That at the end of the Title the words "and the Land Act, 1898," be added.

This is in consequence of the inclusion of a clause which the chairman considered to be an amendment of the Land Act.

Amendment passed, the Title as amended agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment to the Title, and a Message accordingly forwarded to the Assembly requesting them to make the amendment, leave being given to sit again on receipt of a Message from the Assembly.

BILL—ROAD CLOSURE.

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [4.48] in moving the second reading said: I intend to lay on the Table the papers containing the notes and the plan relating to this Bill. The notes are as follow:—1, Closure of right-of-way in the subdivision of part of Swan Location 537. The owner of the subdivision shown on tracing No. 1 desires to recast the subdivision, but before he can do so it will be necessary to close the right-of-way shown in blue. As, however, the plan was lodged prior to the passing of the Transfer of Land Act Amendment Act, 1902, it is considered necessary to close this right-of-way by Act of Parliament. 2, Closure of part of Amos-street, Midland Junction. An arrangement has been made between the Midland Junction municipality and Messrs. Keely Bros., the holders of the land bordered green on tracing No. 2 attached, whereby the council propose to close that portion of Amos-street and transfer the land to Messrs. Keely Bros. in consideration of the surrender by those gentlemen of the land coloured brown on said tracing as an extension of Robert-street. This extension has been surveyed and proclaimed a street, and to complete the transaction it would be necessary to close that portion of Amos-street coloured blue. 3, *Re* proposed closure of road at Northam. When effecting improvements at the east end of the Northam station yard, the Railway Department found it necessary to

close that portion of Morrell-street shown in red on the attached litho. (No. 3), in consequence of which that department were obliged to provide access from Morrell-street to the Charles-street crossing. The road in green was, therefore, resumed by the Public Works Department and vested in the Northam council. The Railway Department now find it necessary to deviate this road to the position shown in blue. The department agreed to maintain this road provided they could place gates at "A" and "B" so that they could close them after business hours. The Northam council have agreed. It is therefore proposed to close the whole of the present road in green and resume its continuation coloured blue as a railway road so that the Railway Department can control it. 4, Closure of portion of Bellevue-terrace in the City of Perth. The King's Park board has approached the city council requesting the closure of that portion of Bellevue-terrace coloured blue, on Litho. No. 4 attached, in order that it may be added to the Park reserve. The city council have agreed and the necessary survey has been affected. On completion of the closure, it is proposed to immediately proceed with the removal and re-erection of the fencing on the new boundary. The King's Park board states, "The land referred to would be a valuable addition to the park as this particular section of the reserve is very narrow between the main drive and the boundary fence, whilst on the other hand Bellevue-terrace is a cul-de-sac, and the reduced width, one chain, should be ample for all purposes of the residents who have the advantage of the Park frontage which will be further improved and beautified at this point when the inclusion of the extra ground is arranged." Bellevue-terrace will then be one chain wide. 5, Closure of Hillside-street, Mt. Lawley. On the recent visit of the town planning expert from England, he suggested, when at Mt. Lawley, the extension of Regent-street, as shown in red on Tracing No. 5, and the closure of Hillside-street as shown in blue. As

this is a private subdivision, the alteration is being proceeded with. It will be necessary, however, to close Hillside-street by Act of Parliament, as the only other way would be to obtain the consent of the whole of the owners of land in the Mt. Lawley estate. The Perth road board has agreed to the alteration. When the Bill is in Committee I propose to move amendments under the headings "In the city of Perth" and "in the municipality of Fremantle." The first relates to a way over a piece of church land, on which, I understand, a manse is to be erected. The church owns the land on both sides of the way and the consent of the city council is annexed to the file herewith. The other is to correct a misprint in the figures in the schedule to the Act of last session. The intention was to close portion of the foot of High-street, Fremantle, leaving a way, but the figures, as misprinted, made an irregular alignment. I do not propose to take the Bill through Committee to-day, as I recognise that members require a little time to study measures of this character. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading—Amendment six months.

Debate resumed from the 28th October on the motion for the second reading and on amendment by Hon. J. Cornell, "That the Bill be read this day six months."

Hon. W. PATRICK (Central) [4.55]: I intend to oppose the amendment, because I favour the second reading. Without doubt a measure of this kind is necessary, but it is a pity that it is of such a meagre nature. After four years of incubation, the Government might have brought down something bigger and more definite, something we could have understood. However, it will be quite possible to make a satisfactory measure of it by

a few amendments which need not necessarily interfere with the principle of the Bill. In another place the Minister stated that this was a re-pricing Bill, and that he could not accept any amendments to the Land Act, 1898. So far as I can see, there is very little about re-pricing and certainly nothing definite, but there is a considerable amendment of the Land Act involved in this Bill. Clause 2 enables the Governor, in his discretion, to reduce the price of land to a minimum of 3s. 9d. per acre in respect of conditional purchase land taken up in 1910 and since. That is exactly the power the Minister has at the present time. He has full power to sell any land down to 3s. 9d. per acre. It is true that in the Act there is a provision that first-class land shall not be sold at less than 10s., but there is no definition of what constitutes first-class land. First-class land to-day is totally different from first-class land of ten years ago when the pick of the country was being taken up, so that the Bill gives the same power to the Minister, and neither more nor less. It leaves the matter of the price to his discretion; only he is limited to a minimum of 3s. 9d. per acre. If the clause is passed, the year 1907 should be inserted in lieu of 1910. There is an amendment on the Notice Paper to this effect, and I intend to support it. Paragraph (b) provides a minimum price of 2s. 6d. per acre for poison and. Personally I would not give anything for poison land. If such land were offered on the condition that the people taking it up cleared it thoroughly of the poison and carried out the ordinary conditions of the lease, the State would gain by giving the land away. However, it is necessary to fix some price, and 1s. per acre would be quite sufficient for poison land. I mean real poison land, and not a paddock with merely an acre or two of poison in the corner, such as we find in some parts of my own district. Fortunately, there is not a great area of poison there, but I have in mind the poison land in the Williams district, where there is thousands of acres of land infested with poison and quite

worthless until it is cleared of the poison. Assuming that land is reclassified and reduced in price, the clause says that on such reduction being made the lessee shall not receive a refund but the excess shall be placed to his credit to be allowed at the end of the term. I understand that means that the lessee shall be credited at the end of the term. But a measure intended to give assistance to people who are in difficulties is surely of very little use if the relief is to be given ten or fifteen years hence. If by that time the lessee is not absolutely independent of such a small sum as here involved, it will be a sorry thing for Western Australia. I am optimistic enough to think that long before that time the average farmer of Western Australia will not need to trouble himself about a matter of £50 or £60. The settlers need assistance now, not 10 or 15 years hence. I intend to support the amendment in this connection. Clause 3 is very complicated, but from repeated readings of it I gather it practically means that anyone who has a lease of land priced at 15s. or less per acre is to pay 6d. per acre per annum, but that if the price is more than 15s. per acre the rate of 6d. per acre per annum will not apply because that would not pay the amount in 30 years, and therefore a higher rate than 6d. per acre per annum will have to be paid. At the first glance that seems fair enough, but, when the matter is analysed, it is plainly unfair that a person buying land at 10s. per acre per annum is to pay his purchase money in 20 years, while the man buying land at 30s. per acre is to be allowed 30 years. It means that the man obtaining the best land gets also the best terms. I contend there should be no difference at all. The assumption, based on the skill of our surveyors, is that where a man takes up land at £1 per acre and another takes up land at 10s., the land at £1 is worth twice as much as the other land. Assume that a man takes up 1,000 acres at £1 per acre, or a total value of £1,000, and another man takes up 2,000 acres at 10s. per acre, also representing £1,000; then the man who

takes the poorer land, costing more money to fence and double the money to clear, and also being more expensive in regard to water supply, has to pay his purchase price at the rate of 6d. per acre on 2,000 acres, while the man with the superior land has only to pay 6d. per acre on 1,000 acres. Such a position I consider utterly unfair, and in Committee I intend to move that that unfairness be remedied by providing that all lessees shall have their payments distributed over 30 years. There is another point I wish to bring forward, but on which I wish to ask the Colonial Secretary a question before I discuss it. I am under the impression that the Bill as it stands is not applicable to leases, under the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act.

The Colonial Secretary: That is right.

Hon. W. PATRICK: If there is one portion of the farming community that deserves consideration more than another, it is the settlers on some of the repurchased estates. In every case they have paid much higher prices for similar quality than purchasers of Crown land, and as they pay 5 per cent. interest and an additional charge for sinking fund they are overburdened from the start. If a man takes up Crown land at a certain price, he pays under the present law at the rate of £5 per £100, but in the case of repurchased lands—and of course this is absolutely necessary, because the Government's money has been paid for the estates, and interest and sinking fund have to be provided—instead of paying £5 per £100 over a period of 20 years, he has to pay £7 12s. 10d. per £100 for 20 years. I propose to move the addition of a further clause providing that this Bill shall also apply to lands under the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act. In this connection I intend to read a letter which I received this morning from a Mr. Dillon, written on behalf of a number of settlers at Bowes. I may mention that Mr. Dillon last Christmas sent me a very ably written document relating to those settlers, showing what money had been spent and in what improvements it had been spent, and asking, not for any re-

duction in price, but for extension of time for payment. The settlers on that estate are a splendid class of men, and a credit to Western Australia. The State would not suffer to the extent of three-pence by agreeing to their request. The letter I have received from Mr. Dillon to-day is dated Naraling, the 26th October, and reads as follows:—

At a meeting of this branch of the Farmers' and Settlers' Association of Western Australia held on the 24th October, the following resolution was unanimously passed: "That this meeting views with grave concern and intense disappointment the fact that lands held under the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act are not included in the provisions of the Amending Land Bill now before the House; claiming in common fairness that such lands should benefit in the proposed extension of lease from 20 to 30 years." The meeting further deplores the fact that the definite promise that excess payments of rent should be credited to next ensuing payments is not being kept, and urge that you use your best endeavours to remedy these pregnant defects when the Bill reaches the Upper House.

I may say that a copy of the same resolution has been sent to Mr. Carson and also to Mr. Baxter. I anticipate that the Government's reply to this request will be that it is not possible to include an amendment of this description in the present Bill. The first Agricultural Lands Purchase Act was passed in 1896, and in 1909 Parliament passed a consolidating measure which repealed all previous enactments on this subject. The Consolidation Act of 1909 states that it shall be known as the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act of 1909, and shall be read as one with the Land Act of 1898. That is to say, to all intents and purposes the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act of 1909 is simply a portion of the Land Act of 1898, and, as a matter of fact, the Government Printer, I believe, binds the two measures up together. The difficulty which I anticipated, and which caused

me to put a question to the leader of the House, should therefore be no difficulty at all. I am sure the Colonial Secretary and also the Minister in charge of this measure in another place will agree that if one portion of our settlers who are in difficulties should be assisted, this addition should be made. I have no doubt my amendment will be accepted by the Government. The only difficulty of the Government, I believe, was that they were afraid they could not introduce such an amendment into this Bill. If the amendments which I have foreshadowed are not included in the Bill, then any reduction in rental would be of very little immediate assistance, and certainly this measure, instead of representing assistance, will be of no assistance whatever to lessees who are already on the land, and will be rather a drawback than an advantage to future settlers. Because under the Bill the whole of the rent is to be demanded straight away, whereas under the present Act not more than 6d. per acre per annum is asked for the first three years. I mention that because, notwithstanding that it was called a repricing Bill by hon. members in another place, there is no mention of repricing, nothing definite about reduction, although it is mentioned incidentally, and we have on the wall an elaborate plan and schedule of prices which are not referred to in the Bill. While there might be great difficulty in putting a plan in the Bill—to have satisfactorily dealt with the enormous area of country considered in the plan, the plan should have taken a much longer time to prepare than it did—especially a plan that must be altered and amended from time to time, there is no earthly reason why the schedule of prices should not be put in the Bill. In fact, if it is not put in the Bill we have no guarantee that any reduction of prices will be made. The Governor-in-Council may reduce the price if he considers it excessive, but unless the prices are put in the Bill there is no guarantee that they will be reduced. Of course we could depend on the Minister

if he were immortal, and provided that the Government stand; but we must assume that even so strong a Government as the present one may fall, in which case we have no guarantee that a future Minister will have at the back of his head all the ideas embodied in the schedule and the plan. Therefore, except the schedule is put in the Bill, the measure will be of but little real effect. After all, the administration of the Bill will be the test as to whether there is to be any reduction of prices at all. Mr. Mitchell, the ex-Minister for Lands, stated in another place that the average price of land selected from the 1st July, 1909, to the 30th June, 1911, was 13s. 2d. per acre. The greater part of that schedule on the wall shows higher prices than 13s. 2d., so clearly the question of relief will depend on the administration of the Bill. One serious complaint the farmers have to make against the present Government: Mr. Bath, when Minister for Lands, appointed commissioners to report on the reclassification of lands. They reported as follows—

With the exception of a few subdivisions, 20s. per acre has been the maximum price placed on land in the wheat belt within five miles of a railway.

I have carefully read the speeches made on the second reading in another place, and the whole of the debate in Committee. It appears that after Mr. Bath had received this report he advised Cabinet that 15s. per acre should be the maximum price of land in the wheat belt. It appears also that Mr. Scaddan, during his electioneering campaign, announced as part of the policy of the Government that 15s. an acre would be the maximum price. A strong supporter of the Government in another place, the member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. E. B. Johnston) asked why the Government had repudiated that policy; and the reply was, "Because the electors turned it down." That was a most extraordinary statement to make. Here is the undoubted fact, that the Government had announced a policy—I do not say with the object of catch-

ing votes; it certainly did not catch many—

The PRESIDENT: I must ask the hon. member not to allude to any debate of the current session in the Assembly.

Hon. W. PATRICK: I was referring to something that occurred some years ago. The announcement was made by the Premier at, I believe, Boulder, prior to the elections, that the Government intended to sell land at a maximum price of 15s. per acre. All I can say is there has been no satisfactory explanation as to why the Government have departed from that policy. There is a very great difference between 15s. an acre and 25s. an acre, as contemplated in the schedule. When I think of this enunciated policy and its repudiation I am reminded of one of the sayings of Machiavelli: "A promise is a necessity of the past; a broken promise is a necessity of the present." Mr. Cornell said he was opposed to the measure root and branch. He declared that it aims at the birthright of generations unborn. That is a very comprehensive sentence because, of course, generations unborn stretch away into the distant future. I can understand Mr. Cornell's point of view. He said that as population grows land increases in value, and he referred to the oft-quoted instance of a bottle of rum purchasing in Sydney, 100 years ago, a block of land. Of course one can understand that 100 years ago a bottle of rum was more valuable than a block of land in Sydney, was worth at least £1. If that pound had been invested 100 years ago and, like Rip Van Winkle, the owner had gone to sleep to awaken to-day, I can quite believe he would find the compound interest on the pound sufficient to buy him a block of land in Sydney, even at its present price. It is all bearing on the old subject of unearned increment. Thirty or 40 years ago, when I had less sense than I have to-day, I used to read books like *Looking Backward* and *Progress and Poverty*, and a great many other Utopian works, and I thought then that I could reform the world if it were given me to carry

out the ideas contained in those books. However, it did not take long to find out that I was very foolish, and many years ago I saw through this fallacy of population increasing land values. If we could put a wall around a country, and if that country had no business with any part of the outside world, but produced everything that it required, no doubt the owners of land in that area would become the masters. In the sense in which Mr. Cornell was speaking, if a country could be surrounded by a high wall, and provided there was no such thing as human nature, if all the men and women in that country were angels, treating everyone fairly, there would be no necessity for owning land at all. Anyone knows this. What gives value to our farming lands in Australia to-day? It is not the population in our cities or towns in Australia. Nothing of the kind. The value is given to our land by the populations of the old country and of Europe. Our farming lands and our sheep farmers would be worth nothing at all but for these populations. Even this year our population of 300,000 people will produce, if our expectations of the harvest are realised, ten times as much grain as Western Australia could require in the course of 12 months. What, therefore, would be the use of nine-tenths of this production if it was not for the markets contained in the outside world? The same thing applies to wool. We in Australia do not use one per cent. of the wool that we produce. After providing all the wool necessary for the clothing required in Australia we would not, I think, use as much as two bales to every hundred bales of wool we export to overseas markets. Consequently, unless there was the population in other parts of the world to draw upon, it would be practically useless our growing the sheep or shearing them. These opinions as to unearned increments are perfectly well understood by the average man of common sense but they are continually repeated. They are part of the fad of the non-alienation of Crown lands which is found in the plat-

form of the Labour party to-day. But judging from the speeches which have been delivered by presumably supporters of the Government, I believe that fully four-fifths of those who at present occupy workers' homes prefer freehold to leasehold, and pay a higher rate of interest to enjoy the privilege of freehold. Mr. Cornell made a statement that this Bill would mean a loss of £30,000 a year. I would point out however, that we have no statement from the Colonial Secretary as to there being any such loss, or any definite grounds whatever for it. If there had been information in the office of the Lands Department to prove that under this plan the Government would sustain a loss of £30,000 a year, surely those particulars would have been placed before this Chamber. If it is in existence, members should have it. I do not believe, however, that the Government will lose anything under the classification laid down in that schedule. There may be rents in arrears, but the Government have taken good care to collect the money which is in arrear by transfers from loan fund. The consolidated revenue fund does not suffer to the extent of a half penny by the money which is in arrears; in fact, it will gain under the system. For the first time in the history of the State the Government are getting money out of loan funds to clear off arrears, whereas in the past there was always somewhere between £60,000 and £80,000 due to the Government by way of arrears of rent. I was astonished at Mr. Cornell speaking in the manner in which he did. I thought his sympathies would run in a different direction, after reading the speech he made at the picnic at Yandanooka. Speaking on that occasion he said that he emphatically combated the oft-repeated allegation that the goldfields were hostile to the greatest possible encouragement being given to agricultural development. Only the other day, however, speaking in the Chamber he said, in a pettish way, and making the statement as strong as possible "Let us give them the lot." As a matter of fact, the Government propose

to give nothing at all. We know that at the beginning of this year railway freights were all raised. This increase falls heaviest upon the farmer because he lives furthest away from the centres of population. The increased freights are designed to prevent the railways from making a bigger loss than they would otherwise do. The freights on artificial manures, superphosphates, have been raised to the extent of £30,000 a year. That is to say, from this last-mentioned item alone sufficient money will be raised from the farmers in this the worst year they have ever experienced to equal the amount which it is said the Government may lose by the passage of this Bill, but which I maintain they will not lose. How differently did the Government deal with the people interested in Collie coal, when the Commissioner of Railways pointed out that the carriage of Collie coal did not pay and it was proposed to raise the freight upon that product! There was at once a howl from Collie. We all know that most of the people who are working in the Collie coal trade are supporters of the Government. I do not of course say that this would weigh with the Government. The fact remains that there was some hidden sympathy, because we had the proof in that the Government did not raise the freights on Collie coal. It is repeatedly stated that the farmers are paying nothing. That is a monstrous statement to make, because it is incorrect. As a matter of fact, the farmers who are not paying very much are those who have been assisted by the Government. The great majority of the farmers are however, paying every expense they are under to the Government and as the money falls due. The proof of that was shown in the fact that up to the 30th June, 1914, the land revenue was greater than it was for the previous year, when there had been no assistance whatever given by the Industries Assistance Board for the payment of rent. When bad times fell upon the State the Government did come forward with some assistance. No Government would have dared to have refused to

help the farmers during those times, but the present Government have taken good care—and I do not blame them for it—that the State shall lose nothing by this assistance to the farmer, by the securities they have taken and the rate of interest they have charged. If this Bill is to be of any use the relief that is given must be given immediately and not deferred for 10 or 15 years. I am sure that after that farmers' experience of such a bad season as they recently had, no one can doubt the need that exists for helping them. The farmers do not come to the Government as beggars; they are simply asking for assistance and it is surely only just that they should get it. A remark was made by Mr. Colebatch with which I entirely agree, namely that the present favourable and bright prospects of getting out of our financial mess to some extent are dependent entirely on the land settlement in this State, which was chiefly the result of the work of the Minister for Lands of the previous Administration. The hon. Mr. Mitchell may have made mistakes. No one can do big things without some mistakes, and possibly some big mistakes. But no one could deny that, but for the system of land settlement, which was inaugurated and carried out with so much energy by the previous Government Western Australia would have been in a dreadful position at the present time. Things are bad enough now, but the country would have been in a hopeless position but for this scheme of land settlement, and there would have been no opening through which we could have seen any daylight in regard to brighter prospects. The prospects are certainly brighter in view of the probability of a good harvest during the current season. This is due to the fact that farmers have transformed our land into smiling farms, orchards and vineyards. Surely those who have been so unfortunate as to take up land just at the beginning of a series of bad seasons are entitled to the greatest possible consideration. I was very much struck with portion of an article which appeared in this morning's *West Australian*, dealing with the trip

made by the Premier and party to some of the farming districts. Here is an extract from that article—

He (the Premier) was taken into the home of one, a home made of interlaced brushwood lined with hessian and covered with iron. It was scrupulously clean, and evidences of refinement were spread about. The story told by that humble dwelling was a story repeated often that afternoon through the area. The folk had sacrificed a life hitherto led amid the comforts of civilisation in a big English city, had brought a fair capital to this State, and selected land through which the plan showed the course of a railway. They had built a temporary home, and left their finery and more valuable goods packed in the cases in which they had been brought from overseas, but those cases are still unpacked, and the humble home remains the only home, and the railway is still only on the map. In a quiet chat the Premier had with them, he told them that the war alone had prevented his completion of the line, and impressed upon them that it was not on him the blame for their plight rested. As he had told others, he had had to take up with the fruits of office a host of obligations.

If the Government, instead of going in for so many experimental schemes such as State steamers, brickyards, implement works, timber mills, butchers' shops, fish-shops and the like, had left them alone, and had spent the hundreds and thousands of pounds which they disbursed on these on the construction of such railways as are referred to in this article as not having been built, there would have been no necessity for the reporter of the *West Australian* to have said what he did.

Hon. E. M. CLARKE (South-West) [5.45]: It is not my intention to delay the House for long, but certainly a Bill of this character merits due consideration. I may say at once I welcome any small measure of relief to the farmers. I must confess I do not know how in the name of common sense the Government are going to administer a Bill like this

which is really built on imaginary lines. How they are going to adjust it; and having adjusted it to their liking, what benefit will the settlers get? The conditions to my mind are so absolutely unfair in their incidence that I am inclined to think the settlers will say, thank the Government for nothing. I can only repeat what has been said by other members, that what the man on the land wants is immediate relief, something tangible, not something which may come in twenty years' time. They want some consideration to help them over the difficulties which they are encountering. The price at which the land has been sold has been far too high, in my opinion. The amount the Government receive for the land, spread over such a long time is practically of no benefit to the State. What the State requires is that all our waste lands—our good lands—should be worked and producing wheat and other things. Those are the things which will make the country go ahead; but to talk about the revenue from land rents before everything, makes me sick of it. All the land that has been sold has been far too dear, and the only way to simplify things is to make an all-round reduction of the value of the land that has been sold in this State. I wish to deal with one or two matters which Mr. Patrick has referred to. Take for instance the whole of the repurchased estates. I may say that I have taken a big interest in this matter for many years. Under the first Agricultural Lands Purchase Act, after paying the cost of the survey and the inspections, by the spirit of the Act it was intended that the Government should sell at an advance of about ten per cent. on the cost price. Every block that I have known anything about has been sold at far above what the land was really worth, and far above what the Land Purchase Board considered a fair thing. I admit that the board had nothing to say in that matter. The price was put on the first blocks and it was such that it deterred to a great extent the Land Purchase Board recommending the purchase of a number of other estates. Take

the first estate purchased near Toodyay. There was a considerable area of poison land upon that estate. An offer was made for the poison land and the board recommended that the offer, being a reasonable one, should be accepted. But no, the Government piled up the price on it, the result being that they had to reduce the amount eventually. The same thing occurred in regard to the Grass Valley estate. The Government had an offer for the inferior land on that estate but did not take it and I do not think they ever received an offer again. I come now to two of the crowning events which prevented the purchase of estates in the South-West. The first estate purchased there the Government paid 12s. 6d. an acre for. The estate was surveyed; it was a very easy block to deal with from a surveyor's standpoint, and the Government put the price up to over £2 per acre for a considerable portion of it and they failed to get applicants for the land. That was the Clifton area. I now come to the Stirling estate. That was purchased for a fraction over £1 per acre. There were 9,900 acres in the estate and the board advised the purchase of it for £10,000, a fraction over £1 per acre. What happened? A lot of that land was cut up with 40 miles of roads and a considerable portion was sold at £14 per acre. It is not much if you say it quickly. That land was put up to that price and I know of my own knowledge that some of the poorest land was charged as much as £4 an acre for, the result being that the purchasers could not pay the amount and so there had to be an adjustment. The people who purchased this land believed that it was to be drained and it has not been effectually drained to this day. The Government have spent something like £7,000 in draining the land but it has not been drained properly. If these repurchased estates are not to be considered Crown lands and dealt with under the Bill, I want to know why. I say emphatically, and I know what I am talking about, that I think the Government have exceeded their powers under the Agri-

cultural Lands Purchase Act. The position at the present time is simply this. We are importing a tremendous quantity of stuff that we should be growing. I refer to bacon, butter and those kind of things. What are the Government doing on that land? They are going to start a butter factory, I believe at Denmark, and my opinion is that the fewer things of that character the Government take in hand the better for the country. In that, I am only going by the lesson which has been taught us by every one of the works the Government have undertaken. It might be said to be a bit parochial, but the Government have pointed out all the butter factories that have failed, but the Minister in speaking on this Bill in another place did not refer to the butter factory at Bunbury. Still there is a factory there, and what has happened? We used to get a little cream, but during the last few months we have got none. The Government have eighty head of cattle and I suppose the cream goes up to another big herd somewhere else. What is wanted in this place is not this tiddely-winking but something by which the ordinary settler will know what he is going to get, some immediate benefit however small. How is the Bill going to affect the settler? I am going to vote for the measure and against the amendments because I believe in assisting the settlers. Let the Government revalue the whole of the land of the State, or take another proposition, make an all-round reduction of a certain percentage of the value of the land. That would meet the case with the least trouble and if the Government are not getting any direct benefit it would mean a great encouragement to the settlers to go on. I wish to emphasise the matter of the repurchased estates, that the purchasers should get some consideration. They have paid big prices for all the land and I say it again advisedly, settlement of the repurchased estates has been retarded to a great extent owing to the price which the Government have charged for the land. I shall vote for the second reading.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan) [5.52]: I find myself unable to support the amendment moved by the hon. Mr. Cornell, and I do so with regret for personal reasons; but I want to encourage the Government to neglect as far as possible that fighting platform that the hon. member refers to and on account of the neglect of which he moved the amendment. I intend to support the second reading, not that I am very enthusiastic about the contents of the Bill but because I understand from members who may be taken as experts there is a lack of definition about the Bill which is extremely annoying. One point raised in the amendment foreshadowed is the treatment of repurchased estates as outside the province of the Land Act of 1898. I do not see how that can be done, nor do I consider that the amendments foreshadowed by Mr. Baxter and Mr. Patrick can be required in the Bill. If members turn to the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act they will find. Section 1 is as follows:—

This Act may be cited as the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act, 1909, and shall be read as one with the Land Act, 1898.

If members will turn again to Section 9 of the same Act, they will find that—

All land surrendered to His Majesty under the provisions of this Act shall be deemed to be Crown lands, and after being surveyed into sections, and, if necessary, classified, shall be disposed of in accordance with the provisions of the Land Act, 1898, as modified by this Act.

If the Lands Department are not treating the holders of land in repurchased estates as holders under the Land Act and are not giving them the advantages which are conferred on them by the Act of 1898, may I suggest that to the ordinary lay mind, the Government appear to be acting contrary to the legislation on the Statute-book. As I say, this is an aspect that appears to the lay mind, it may be I am wrong, although the sections appear to be definite that the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act should be read as one with

the Lands Act of 1898 and lands held under the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act should be deemed to be Crown land and dealt with in accordance with the provisions of the Land Act, 1898. That should obviate the necessity of any amendment such as has been foreshadowed, but I have no doubt the leader of the House will make certain this is the case before he opposes the amendment on this ground. I certainly do think that the schedule which adorns our walls should find a place in the Bill and it would be quite a relief to another place when we send back a prosaic measure like this to receive it from the Legislative Council adorned with illustrations. I support the second reading.

Hon. G. M. SEWELL (South-East) [5.57]: I would like to say a few words on this Bill. It is not altogether what we expected to see or what we would like; at the same time it will be a step in the right direction. The amendment which I see on the Notice Paper is an attempt to reduce the price of land and that is what we want. Cheaper land is the best inducement we can give to settlement. When the Land Company owned the Great Southern Railway with the land alongside they charged from 20s. up to 30s. an acre for the land on twenty years' terms. The result was that very little land was sold. After the Government took the land over the price was reduced to 10s. an acre and the land was then rushed. People came from all directions and took up land all along the line, good and bad. The people are still on it and doing very well and paying their way. If we can sell our land cheaply, that is the best inducement to settlement. The Government should do all they possibly can to induce people to settle on the land. It is better to let the land go cheaply than to permit it to remain idle. When the land is improved the country derives some benefit. I intend to support the second reading.

Hon. E. McLARTY (South-West) [6.3]: I do not intend to support the amendment moved by Mr. Cornell, and I am not in accord with the reasons which he has given to the House in support of his action. I propose to vote for the

second reading of the Bill, because I consider it is a measure which will afford some relief to settlers, especially those who have taken up land and have had to pay in many instances a high price for it. But as has been pointed out by other hon. members, the Bill is an indefinite one. I should like to have seen the usual schedule attached to it. As a land holder I do not think that good land should be given away. Where first class land exists, I consider it is worth a reasonable price, and the man who cannot afford to pay 6d. per acre to obtain the freehold of a first class property, is better off the land altogether. I do not think that the price of land affects the settlers very much, because of the long terms he is given under which he can pay. The one thing that the settler in this State does require is facilities to enable him to get his produce away after it has been grown. It is utterly impossible for those who have taken up land in the back country, and who are living miles from a railway, to ever hope to make wheat-growing pay. I know what it is to cart over heavy roads, and I am satisfied that if a settler is not within reasonable distance of a railway, a distance which will permit of him leaving his farm in the morning and returning to it in the evening, he had better leave farming alone. If a man has the facilities which are essential to farming, the matter of a few shillings an acre will not affect him very much. Land is the greatest asset we have, and if we give it away we will feel the pinch later on. At the same time inferior land can hardly be of the value which has been placed upon it. With reference to the poison country, it is difficult to fix a hard and fast rate, because the conditions vary so much. A man may take up a thousand acres of land with poison on a very small corner of it. If that land is good we cannot put a low price on it, and say that it should be disposed of because of the small quantity of poison on it. If, however, the poison is thick and is costly to get rid of, I agree that it is in the interests of the State to encourage people to take it

off and that these people should be allowed to go on that land free of any charge. I have not had any experience of poison country because I have always refused to touch it. I think it is better left alone, but the man who has the energy and pluck to clear it deserves all the encouragement he can get at the hands of the State. A good deal of criticism has been levelled at the methods adopted by the previous Government, and particularly the former Minister for Lands, Mr. Mitchell, in settling people on the land. I think a great deal of credit is due to that gentleman for the enthusiasm he showed in the matter of settling people on the land. Before the dry season set in, the country bore a very different aspect. I have been told by men of considerable experience, men like Mr. Tom Wilding, that they have seen country carrying two-ton crops, and that the people were highly satisfied with their investments. Yet a season or two afterwards, when the rain to some extent, failed, these same people were throwing the blame on to the Minister for Lands, for having induced them to take up those areas. I take a broader view of the position, and the conclusion I have arrived at is that the country owes a great deal to the Liberal Government for what it did in connection with land settlement. The people I represent do not complain about the price of the land; what they want is better facilities. No man who starts on the land can afford to spend his energy and time in dragging his produce miles to the railway. This measure affects the people generally. There is an impression in some quarters that only the Country party are interested in the question of land, and that it is that party only which represents those who are settled on the land. I protest against that belief. I have had the honour of occupying a seat in this House for over 20 years, and I know that the interests of the settlers have never been neglected by a single member in this Chamber. Hon. members who have sat with such men as the late Mr. C. A. Piesse will agree with me that no one fought harder battles for the people on the land than did that late

member. He was never tired of advocating the claims of settlers, and we know how he carried a number of them on his back to the extent of enormous sums of money. Those people prospered and they never forgot what he did for them.

Hon. J. Cornell: And above all he was a fair-minded man.

Hon. E. McLARTY: Then there was Mr. Wilding who occupied a seat in this Chamber for a considerable time. In mentioning these names, I am not disrespectful to the present Country party. All I want to point out is that the interests of the settlers were well and carefully attended to long before the Country party were ever thought of. But what kind of gratitude was ever shown towards those who worked so hard for the farmers in the past? The late Mr. Piesse, Mr. Wilding, Mr. Marwick, and others, had the interests of the settlers as much at heart as the members of the present Country party. For my own part, I am the unfortunate owner of a good bit of land, for which I pay dearly now. Having bought and paid for all my land, I find now that it will be pretty heavily mortgaged for a considerable time to come. Taxes and nothing but taxes, and the State is deriving the greater benefit. Where does the argument of the Labour party come in, that the land should be leased and not sold? Even when it is sold and paid for the man in possession has to begin contributing by way of heavy taxation. The interests of the country people have never been neglected in this House; they have always been watched by members who have never had anything to do with a Country party. I have the greatest sympathy with those who are on the land, because I know of their difficulties. I myself followed the plough when I was ten years of age, and I carried the seed box on my shoulders over hundreds of acres, and I know what it is when the crops fail. Only a little time back, I put before my constituents the case of a number of settlers who found themselves in difficulties. I asked my constituents to go to their rescue, and I started a subscription list. There was a splendid response, even from the poorest

people who could not afford to give more than a few shillings. A large sum of money was raised, and I requested that it should be expended in the direction of providing flour for the needy ones, and 48 or 50 settlers were given a quarter of a ton each.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. E. McLARTY: Before tea I expressed the opinion that the settlers had not been neglected before the Country party came into existence. If it is a fact that the revenue will suffer to the extent of £30,000 a year if this measure is passed, there are other ways in which the Government might easily recoup themselves. The whole of the land question should be dealt with in a more comprehensive manner than is represented by this Bill. A suggestion has been made to the Minister for Lands by the Pastoralists' Association that he should introduce a Bill providing for an extension of pastoral leases throughout the State with, of course, increased rentals. If that were done, I am sure the Government would more than recoup themselves for any loss under this measure. The pastoral leases will terminate in 1928. Members might think this a long time ahead but, on closer consideration, they will realise that people are not inclined to take up large pastoral runs unless they have some security of tenure and a further extension of their leases is assured them. A man who takes up a large area in the north would have to spend a considerable sum of money on fencing, water conservation, and other improvements and he could not recoup himself for the outlay within the currency of the present leases. If the Government extended the leases for 30 years from the present time at increased rentals, and made it optional to present lessees whether they surrendered their leases and paid the increased rates and took out fresh leases, all the larger pastoralists would readily avail themselves of this provision, and it would have the effect of stimulating them to effect greater

improvements than they are likely to do under existing conditions. We are constantly hearing suggestions for cheapening the price of meat. I think that by encouraging the people to take up new country improve it and stock it, we would be adopting the best means to make the supply equal to the demand, and the Government would reap a very handsome reward. At the present time, when the finances are in such a hopeless condition, this would assist them very much. The pastoralists are not so unreasonable as to expect a renewal of leases for a lengthened term without paying an adequate rent for it. It has been suggested that the rents should be arranged according to the facilities of railway communication or proximity to a shipping port. I should have been more pleased to see a comprehensive measure dealing with the whole of the land question. I am satisfied that this would have given great satisfaction to the settlers now in occupation of extensive holdings, and that an enormous area of country now lying idle would be taken up, and it would also have been the means of the Government obtaining a very much larger revenue than they can expect during the tenure of the present leases. I support the second reading of the Bill.

The PRESIDENT: The amendment is before the House.

Hon. E. McLARTY: I am opposed to the amendment. I look upon the Bill as intending to give some assistance to the agricultural community, and anything which will do that in a reasonable manner will receive my support. I assure my friends of the Country party that any amendments which will conduce to this end will receive my hearty support.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON [7.37]: I regard this measure as an attempt to comply with a promise made by the Government to rectify an injustice of the previous Government. When I refer to it as an injustice, I do not insinuate that it was necessarily intentionally so, but the fact remains that to a large extent the agricultural areas were over-priced. In reference to the theoretical position

which has been referred to by Mr. Cornell, I am to a certain extent in accord with his views; yet I find it impossible to support the amendment for the simple reason that he offered no alternative. If we carry the amendment we shall revert to the old order of things. His amendment does not mean that a new system of land tenure would be introduced. It will mean merely leaving things as they are. As I consider the present position is not equitable from the farmers' point of view, I offer no apology for not supporting the amendment, although I agree to a certain extent with what Mr. Cornell said in reference to our present system of land tenure. There appears to be an impression broad that there is no argument in favour of a system of leasehold as opposed to the present system of freehold. Mr. Cornell is in particularly good company when he advocates the views he expressed. It is not a question of referring to such works as that of Edward Bellamy. If we want supporters of the principle of leasehold we have, as I intimated by interjection, such men as Herbert Spencer who was considered one of the greatest economists who has ever written on the subject. In his early days, he wrote a book on *Social Statics* which plainly set out the case for the leasehold system or the idea that the State should retain the ownership of all land. In after years he recanted, and it took Herbert Spencer to refute his former arguments. In my opinion he did not succeed, but he tried. The fact remains that we still have his authority when he was untrammelled and wrote what he actually conceived to be sound economics, that he favoured the non-alienation of Crown land, so there is no need to apologise for the views put forward by Mr. Cornell. Even to-day, I suppose, this is one of the most debatable economic questions, and I am not satisfied that the present system of land tenure is all that can be desired. There are many evils springing from the alienation of land from the Crown and there would be many benefits if the ownership of the land had been retained by the Crown. Even in

Western Australia, not only the farming areas but the whole of the lands of the State, including the townsites, would have represented a splendid asset to the State and a sure source of revenue had the land not been alienated. However, this measure is not one that can be approached from this point of view. We are not here to decide whether the system of land tenure in this State shall be altered from freehold to leasehold. We are discussing an amendment to the present Act. In connection with the proposal to re-price the lands of this State, the former Minister for Lands, Mr. Mitchell, has been given credit for having done a great deal to settle the farming areas of this State. Presumably it is necessary in a new country to do a certain amount of booming and as far as Mr. Mitchell was concerned, he cannot be accused of having been lax in this direction. At the same time any question that is over-stated generally brings evil in its train. I remember Mr. Mitchell, when advocating land settlement in this State, gave it out plainly—he was then in a responsible position and people were justified in accepting what he stated as being true—that it was not necessary for anyone going on to the farming areas to have capital; the State would see that they were supplied and there would be an almost immediate return. Undoubtedly this was misleading, and it had the effect of inducing many people to go on the land under the impression that they did not require capital to start with. There are different ways of guiding men when they propose to undertake any venture but, if I were asking advice when entering on a long dry stage, I would prefer to be told plainly what I was to expect, so that I could prepare for that dry stage, rather than be told in an airy fashion that it was quite safe and there would be no danger to myself. Had the position been stated plainly and had the settlers gone on the land with their eyes open, they would have had only themselves to blame; but the fact remains they were placed on the land by a certain amount of misrepresentation which has caused no

end of trouble since. In regard to the over-pricing of land I could not help being struck by a remark of Mr. McLarty that the question of the price a man paid for land had perhaps not much to do with his success or otherwise. I believe this to be so in many instances, and what is required, needless to say, when a man goes on the land is that he should have suitable land and the facilities needed to make a commercial proposition of farming. I am hopeful that to a certain extent this Bill will relieve the present position. At any rate, considering that a good many of the areas taken up have been over-charged, the Bill represents at least a measure of justice with a view to remedying that position. As this Bill has that object in view, I necessarily must support it. Mr. Colebatch, I notice, admits that we have passed through four of the worst seasons on record. When that admission is made, it is generally admitted also that the people directly concerned have suffered and that the people who have dealt with them, the tradespeople, have suffered. But what we are always finding it difficult to get an admission of is that the Government, representing the people, have also suffered; and that this is to a great extent responsible for the present financial position of the State. Had we had normal seasons, probably there would not be the same urgency for a measure of this description; but, taking everything into consideration, the people on the land, those trading with them, and also the Government, have suffered because of the bad seasons. We now find ourselves in the position of requiring to do everything we possibly can to assist those who are on the land. Another matter to which I wish to refer in connection with re-pricing is that many areas, although they may eventually be found suitable for farming and may become payable propositions, were certainly not so under the conditions obtaining at the time they were first selected. The trouble is that men went on the land not realising the position. At that time, moreover, there was no water supply in many of the drier areas, and transport

service was certainly not good, and in some cases not assured. We have instances even to-day, where the promise of railway communication has not been fulfilled. Independently of that, I maintain that many of the areas settled in this State should not have been settled as they were. There has been untold trouble by reason of people rushing on to areas which, under the conditions then prevailing, were unsuitable. Settlers themselves have suffered, and the State has had to back them up in various directions in order to keep them on the land. I believe that eventually the areas referred to as dry will be successful farming areas. When sufficient acreages are cleared and water supply is assured and mixed farming can be carried on, it will be altogether a different proposition from what it was when settlers first went on the land. In those days, instead of farming, they were engaged for the greater portion of their time in clearing land and in carting water. In future the men who had to struggle will probably be in a better position, because instead of so much of their time being occupied with the matters I have mentioned they will be able to devote the whole of their energies to their holdings and to making those holdings commercial propositions. The previous Government, as I stated, though perhaps with no desire to mislead the settlers, certainly were responsible for putting them on areas which at that time and under those conditions were unsuitable. We now find ourselves in the position of having to meet the promissory notes or promises of the previous Government. I just wish to refer to one matter mentioned by Mr. Colebatch. The hon. member said that if certain amendments were made in this Bill and the measure was eventually thrown out, the members of the opposing party would stump the country with their usual lying and slanderous statements in regard to this Chamber. I do not know why the hon. member should have developed such heat over a question of this sort. In the present instance the Government are endeavouring to give the farmers a fair deal. I thought that

would be recognised even by those who oppose the Government. As regards lying and slanderous statements—a remark which you, Sir, allowed—my experience is that those who are anti-Labour are just as good as that kind of thing—

Hon. H. P. Colebatch (in explanation): The remarks I made in the connection referred to by Mr. Millington had nothing whatever to do with the Labour party. I specifically stated that I referred merely to a small section of the Farmers' and Settlers' Association. What I said did not in any way refer to the Labour party.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: I am very pleased to hear Mr. Colebatch make that statement. I certainly derived the impression that he referred to those who were in opposition to him politically. However, on that subject I merely wish to say that so far as slanderous statements are concerned, I do not think we have been guilty of going further than the members of either of the other parties. Some hon. members have notified their intention of moving certain amendments when this Bill is in Committee. As a supporter of the measure, and recognising that the session is nearing its close, I think it inadvisable that amendments should be moved unless they are regarded as absolutely vital. This Bill has already been discussed at length by the representatives of three parties in another place, and the measure as we find it evidently meets with the approval of the majority of another Chamber. Now that we have something which to a certain extent meets the position, though it is not all that is required, we should remember that the moving of amendments means that the Bill will be delayed; and though I am not in a position to state what the desire of the Government is on this question I certainly think it inadvisable to attempt amendments at this stage unless, as I say, hon. members consider their amendments absolutely necessary. I have had experience of various measures in which I was particularly interested, and those measures did not by any stretch of imagination meet with my entire approval, or go

nearly as far as I desired. The experience I have had in connection with industrial legislation may be remembered by those who are specially interested in the agricultural industry. In every instance we have to take as a compromise something far below what we desire. Members representing other industries will have to realise that they must be prepared to accept a fair compromise when occasion calls for it.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: We have nothing here.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: The hon. member says, "We have nothing here." The greater part of the legislation which has been passed since I have been a member of this House has been for the benefit of the agricultural industry. Undoubtedly the greater proportion of that legislation has been in the interests of the farming class. Incidentally I may mention that my trouble is that those whom I directly represent complain that the party to which I belong have done very little indeed either in the way of amending existing legislation or introducing new legislation in the interests of our supporters. I do not think either the Country party or the Liberal party have anything to complain of as regards the attention which the farming industry has received. Just one word on the treatment meted out to the agricultural industry and to leaseholders in this State. Mr. Baxter made a statement which would lead us to believe that better terms are given in the Eastern States than in Western Australia. So far as my experience goes, I am not aware that there is any State in the Commonwealth which offers better terms to the settlers either as regards leaseholds or as regards the facilities afforded. I know that many years ago those who were reared on farms in the Eastern States and who were well able to take on farming found themselves driven out of the other States and coming to Western Australia, for the simple reason that they could obtain here terms not obtainable elsewhere in Australia. I believe that this has been the case for a number of years. The system

which has developed here is certainly in the interest of the settlers, and if it has not been so successful as it might have been, that is due entirely to the exceptional run of bad seasons we have experienced latterly. When normal seasons return, if farmers are not prosperous in this State it will not be the fault of the system under which they are working. Personally I believe that the farmers merit all the assistance which can possibly be given them. I know of no class who have suffered the same hardships as the farmers in some of our dry areas, and anything I can do to ameliorate these bad conditions will certainly be done. Anyone with experience amongst new settlers in this State, especially in the dry areas, will always recognise that they are entitled to all the sympathy and support that can possibly be given them. If it were not for my experience amongst those settlers, I would not be so heartily in accord with this measure; and it is on this account I am prepared to advocate that relief be given them so that they may have a favourable opportunity of making good. At the present time, although the outlook is certainly brighter, a good many of those farmers who have been affected by the dry season still have to make a recovery, and the fact that they have good prospects this year does not give any indication of their true financial position. Many of them during the last five years have been working at a loss and have taken on liabilities which will for long be a load upon them. In some instances farmers, by no means in a big way, have incurred liabilities up to £2,000. This means that for a number of years the interest on their loans will have to be met, and will constitute a very heavy tax upon them. The farmers in the dry areas have received such a setback that it will take them many years to recover. In regard to the re-pricing, I recognise that there must be a certain amount of inconsistency. It is most difficult to devise an equitable system of pricing land when the land is variable in quality. Many of the holdings are composed of two or more qualities of land;

in fact, I believe, it was surveyed in the first instance with that object. It has been suggested that the schedule should be included in the Bill, but I do not know that it will be safe to adopt that course, if only on account of the difficulty in arriving at the prices. A further inconsistency will arise on account of varying distances from railway stations. It will be hard to explain to a man just inside the 5-mile limit why he should pay more than the man who is just outside. Even to-day there is a considerable amount of inconsistency in regard to the price of land. I will support the second reading, and I hope that those who intend to introduce amendments will seriously consider before pressing them to an extent that will jeopardise the Bill.

Personal Explanation.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN (South-East) [8.3]: I desire to make a personal explanation. During my absence from the House, Mr. Colebatch attributed to me a very serious statement which I had no thought of making. He said I had charged the late Minister for Lands (Hon. J. Mitchell) with inducing people to take up unsuitable land in dry areas, through a wave of optimism. I never said or thought such a thing. I said that through a wave of optimism which had arisen as the result of judicious advertising and the offering of good terms to settlers, there had been a rush of new settlers, and that on the strength of it the Minister had unduly raised the price of land. That is all I said. That, of course, can be amply verified. I cannot quote *Hansard*, but hon. members can refer to it themselves. I had no thought of charging the ex-Minister with inducing settlement in unsuitable areas.

Debate resumed.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [8.5]: Speaking to the amendment, I desire to say I cannot support it. I recognise that Mr. Cornell holds views strongly in favour of the leasehold system. I firmly believe that if the leasehold sys-

tem had been adopted in the very early days of the history of Western Australia we would not have been here at the present time, that the country would have belonged to some other nation. It is recognised, I think, that the system we have grown up under through thousands of years, after repeated trials of various other schemes, has been definitely adopted, and it is hopeless for us to attempt to turn back the page of history and set out to introduce another system of land tenure. I agree with those who say we would have to alter human nature. It is interesting to hear references made to those writers who have tried to revolutionise the system, but so long as the values of our land depend on the values placed on money, so long as our land values alter from time to time as the price of money rises or falls, so long will we have to accept as the value of our land the value the rest of the world likes to place upon money. I would refer Mr. Millington to Professor Huxley, whose writings on the land. I would refer Mr. Millington to Professor Huxley, whose writings on the subject might serve to alter the hon. member's views. I wish to pay a tribute to the early settlers, who came to this State under very great difficulties. If they had thought for a moment that they would have nothing better than the leasehold system they would not have ventured upon the land. I do not agree with Mr. Millington that a wrong was done when Mr. Mitchell declared that men could go on the land without capital. Mr. Millington holds that no man should have gone on the land without capital; yet he belongs to a party claiming that all men are equal. I cannot reconcile the views of that party when they contend that the settlement of the country can only be accomplished by men with capital. The attitude adopted by that party from time to time serves to scare capital away, which in turn serves to depreciate the values placed on our lands. I am confident that when the wave of optimism referred to by Mr. Cullen took place it was not altogether at the whim or on the advice of Mr. Mitchell. The

people were imbued with the idea that the land of Western Australia was the cheapest proposition to be obtained in the Commonwealth. The high values were placed on the land, not only by Mr. Mitchell, but also by the Midland Railway Company, who were in fact obtaining even better prices than were the Government in exactly similar positions. Many of the lands being acquired from the Government were readily changing hands at enhanced prices. Bonuses were being paid on the Government prices by people wishing to acquire land, and those exchanges were readily taking place because cheap money was available for land settlement and the banks were competing with one another to advance money to the settlers. So those values were placed on the land, not by the Minister but by the community. And, when the Government further encouraged land settlement by laying down new railways to afford ready access to the markets of the world, the proposition became an infinitely better one for the new settlers than had ever been offered in this State before. The Government put down dams and wells and water supplies almost in advance of settlement, and the conditions, even for the man without capital, became very attractive. I do not think any fault can be found with Mr. Mitchell's pricing of the land. Anomalies arose, certainly, but Mr. Mitchell is not to blame for that. When the high prices were placed on the land, the idea was that selection was to be speedily followed by railway communication. In most instances where it had been intended to run a railway, the course of that railway was deviated, and those people who had acquired the land at the higher rate found their lands placed outside the radius of a reasonable and profitable working distance from railway communication, and in many instances have gone on to the present day without the promised railway. Undoubtedly these are instances in which the land is priced too high. These settlers have been waiting for better railway communication and better facilities for reaching the port, a radical reduction in the price of their land, or an easement

over the intervening years of these unfair prices, which they have been charged, by way of a reduction of rent. There has been an outcry from these settlers and a just one too. This Bill reminds me of a loaf of bread which one has been eagerly expecting that one could get a good feed from, only to discover that a mouse has got into it and eaten up the whole of the inside. This will be the position of these settlers when they see this Bill placed before them. The Bill is about as empty as a loaf of bread such as I have been speaking of. We are told that if we make any radical amendment to this Bill the session is likely to close soon without our being able to get any of the small benefits that are to be derived from the Bill, and that we shall wreck the measure entirely. I do not wish to run any risk of wrecking the Bill as there is a small amount of benefit which may accrue to settlers under its provisions, to settlers who are outside the radius of reasonable facilities for marketing their produce and settlers who have been overcharged for their lands. If this Bill means that these people will get a reduction in their land values, I shall be only too pleased. I do not know that the Bill does directly state that this will be the effect of it, but I hope that with the suggested addition of the schedule that we have on the Table the price will be definitely fixed so that these people now outside the areas will have some idea as to the reductions they may be able to claim. I consider that a great deal of the land is of little value indeed. It might also be given away. It is not of value until improvements are made to it. If we could persuade people to put their bona fides developments on to the land and use their money instead of running to the Government for every penny they wish to spend on it, I am satisfied that they would speedily give value to the land. Until the Government make up their minds to withdraw those regulations which were introduced by Mr. Bath, I fail to see that anyone is likely to take up land and develop it. The banks, at the outset of those regulations, necessarily had to with-

draw their promises of support to clients and advise them to go to the Government. It is for that reason that the Government have been complaining that the farmers expected such a lot from them. If the Government are not in a position to give advances in the way of money to the farmers for the development of the public estate it is very unfortunate that they should put such an obstacle in the way of the farmers, as has been done by these regulations. I do not think the land will make any forward strides until these regulations have been absolutely withdrawn. They have never come before us in an Act, and that is one of our troubles in connection with the passing of regulations. These regulations have done more harm than enough in connection with the bona fide settlement of the land of the State. I did hope that in this amending land measure, which has been dangled before the settlers for some years, we should have had something embracing a wider field than this measure seems to do. I would like to have seen the larger question dealt with of lands east of the rabbit-proof fence, which, up to the present, have been practically abandoned, so far as settlement is concerned. I think that if greater security of tenure of leases was given very large tracts of country which are unsuitable for growing wheat, but can be leased to many of those men who are settled in the wheat areas, could be made use of even in drought times in the way of carrying a considerable number of stock. I am satisfied that in these eastern areas where wheat is now being grown settlers will have to carry stock in order to keep down the weeds which a little later on will begin to show in the cultivated areas; but these people cannot keep stock until they have some larger areas to which to withdraw their sheep while their lands are under crop. There is no security, however, if a person takes up a large area in these outback places for any period. Someone else may come along and acquire their leaseholds under different conditions, and, therefore, no one will attempt to deal with these lands

at the present time. I did hope that the Minister, or the Government, would have dealt with this question, and trust that in the next amending land measure this question would be taken in hand. It is a most important question to these people. Unless they can carry stock they will not make a success in developing their lands. The particular matter about which many of the settlers are most concerned is that of having their rents reduced. They have been experiencing for three or four years times in which there have been no returns. In those areas where the farmers have had a fairly good wheat yield, the price of wheat has unfortunately been very low. For a number of years now they have had no opportunity of making very much headway. Although money has been advanced from the Government for their encouragement, that money has had to be advanced by the Government because of those regulations which provided such conditions that the commercial institutions could not possibly continue to advance money themselves. The settlers have, therefore, had to wait upon the Government. This Bill does not give that relief which the settlers have clamoured for, and which I think they are entitled to. Many people who went on the land with capital have expended it, and done their best to keep up their payments, and yet this Bill will give them no relief. There will even be no reduction in the price as suggested by the Bill unless they pay up the whole of their back rents. It is the relief from these back rents which is of such importance to the settlers, even of more importance than the reduction of land values. I cannot understand why the Government have been so intent on avoiding that issue, and have refrained from giving that justice to the settlers to which they are entitled. In the repricing of such lands by the Government, there are anomalies which have been referred to by other speakers. It would be very much better if we could make the whole of these payments for the land extend

over the same period. If we are going to allow the payment on higher priced land to extend 30 years the whole of the land should have the same consideration. That would put all lands on the same fair and reasonable basis, whereas now, as suggested under the Bill, there will be serious anomalies. I do not see how it is going to please everyone. The Government should do something to please those settlers who have for many years clamoured rightfully, and have been promised that some of their grievances in respect of values should be redressed. I have pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill. I think we are facing a danger of losing the Bill entirely. I should be sorry to see this, because there is a promise that some of those who have been outside a reasonable and profitable radius for working their lands shall receive some benefit. It is only right where the values have been too high that they should be reduced. I should be sorry to see the Bill lost entirely. I regard it as a means of affording some relief and an assurance of further settlement which is so much needed in this State.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central—in reply) [8.30]: I hope the hon. Mr. Cornell does not intend to press his amendment to a division.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: He will not be able to do so; he is not here.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: If he does so I shall tremble for the fate of the Bill. There is no doubt that abundant justification has been shown by the majority of speakers in this House, from their point of view, for supporting Mr. Cornell's amendment. The majority of those who have spoken condemn this Bill unreservedly.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: Not at all.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Not the hon. member. The majority of those who have spoken have said that there is very little good in the Bill. Mr. Hamersley himself likened the Bill to a loaf of bread, the heart of which had been eaten by a mouse, and stated that it was little more than an empty shell. A number of

members have spoken in the same strain. If that is the view they hold they should have the courage of their convictions, and should vote with Mr. Cornell if he presses his amendment to a division. I do not propose to say much in reply. All the points raised which have a bearing on the Bill can be dealt with more effectively in Committee. Let me at once tell Mr. Baxter that the amendment he proposes will not be accepted by the Government. This is purely a re-pricing Bill, and it is not desirable that it should be made something more. The scope of this Bill represents the extent to which the Government are prepared to go at the present time. Mr. Baxter complains about the late hour of the session at which the Bill was introduced to this House and the difficulty of giving it mature consideration. To quote his own dates: It was submitted to the Assembly on the 28th September. That is over a month ago. It was an easy matter for Mr. Baxter to have secured a copy of the Bill weeks ago and given it all the consideration he deemed necessary. That was what I used to do when I was a private member of the House. When a Bill was introduced in another place in which I took a deep interest, I at once secured a copy and endeavoured to master its contents. And I am much surprised if the hon. member has not acted similarly in this case, despite his protestation. It does not require much time to get a grip of the principles of the Bill. They are clearly set forth and have been discussed at length in the public Press. In any case, I do not propose to take the measure through Committee to-night.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: That is very generous of you.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Even in this House members will have had nearly a week in which to make up their minds on the various clauses of the Bill. Mr. Baxter takes up an extraordinary attitude in connection with poison land. He says, "The man who takes up a poison lease should be given a large bonus to assist him in keeping it on, and in addition he should not be charged anything for the land." I was expecting to hear

that Mr. Baxter intended moving an amendment specifying the bonus and making an absolutely safe provision that applicants should have this class of country "free, gratis, and for nothing." I find, however, that Mr. Baxter does not intend to go so far as that. His proposal is that the selector shall pay 1s. an acre for this land, which, according to his idea, can only be farmed successfully on the basis that the holder pays no rent and receives a big bonus to help him along. If I held similar views to Mr. Baxter, I would pursue them to their logical conclusion. I would act up to the faith that was in me. I would not compel a man to pay a shilling an acre for land which would pay only on the basis stated. I would insist on his getting the land as a gift, and I would endeavour to get him a Government subsidy as well—that is, of course, if I thought it worth while troubling at all about land which required such adventitious aid to its successful utilisation. I have seen some of the poison country near the Great Southern, and it is really good wheat-growing land. The cost of clearing for cultivation should be small in comparison with the cost of clearing some of the thickly timbered land of no better quality in other parts of our wheat belt, although, of course, some years would have to elapse before it could be safely used for grazing sheep. One point worth remembering in this connection is that the selector of poison land is credited as a permanent improvement with the cost of poison eradication on his land. If it cost him £100 to clear the land from poison he is allowed that amount in regard to the improvements which he is required to effect in accordance with the lease. I am speaking of the desirability of utilising this land for the production of wheat until the poison is effectively cleared. I have known of several instances along the Great Southern railway where selectors who thought the land had been cleared of poison placed stock upon it, and were almost ruined. If they had cultivated it for five or six years and so removed all the poison, I feel certain even stock raising would have been successfully carried on

there. Mr. Colebatch devoted considerable time to a defence of the late Minister for Lands, Mr. Mitchell, who was responsible for the increased prices of land. So far as I am concerned, such a defence is quite unnecessary. I contend that his policy of increasing the price of land was a blunder, but I hope party feeling will never bias me to the extent that I shall refrain from giving any man his due meed of justice irrespective of whether he is opposed to me in politics. Mr. Mitchell made a mistake in increasing the prices, and he made another mistake in going out too far into dry country. But, having said that much against his administration, I can say a good deal in his favour. He made mistakes, as we all make mistakes, but he gave a tremendous impetus to land settlement in this State and infected the whole community with his enthusiasm. He was heart and soul in his labours, and his errors of judgment may be forgiven in the light of good work, which perhaps would never have been accomplished except by committing some errors of judgment. Mr. Colebatch tells us that the method of classification is unscientific and ridiculous, and he refers to a spot at Wongan Hills where four classifications meet. I have seen two members of the board, and they tell me that when pricing land on the boundaries of zones A or B the system was adopted of lowering the prices gradually, having regard to the adjoining lower-priced zone. Also, that the variations in prices from zones C to F are so gradual that scarcely any exception can be taken. Of course anomalies must arise in connection with matters of this character, and Mr. Colebatch can take my assurance that as soon as they are discovered they will be remedied with the greatest possible speed. With regard to Mr. Colebatch's statement that no provision is made for taking into account distance from a port, that circumstance was taken into consideration when framing the zones. The land furthest out is the lowest priced. Mr. Colebatch says, "Such relief as is offered in the Bill will only be effective in a limited number of cases, and that only to a limited extent." That

is an unfair statement to make. I have already pointed out that the annual loss to revenue will be £30,000—arrived at after careful calculation. I was doubtful on this point and I saw the members of the board to-day. They assured me that they went closely into the matter, figured it out and arrived at the conclusion that the annual loss for some years, at any rate, would be £30,000. I will read a statement showing prices ruling in certain areas and the figures to which they have been reduced under the Bill. Hon. members will want to know the effect of reductions in certain instances. I could give numerous instances but I do not want to unduly take up the time of hon. members. I have a list here taken out pretty well at random and I will quote from it certain specific instances. I will give the number of the location if hon. members desire it, but I do not think it is necessary to do so. The first is a statement showing original price and the reduction per acre in zone C in the Avon district: 15s., 12s. 6d.; 16s., 11s. 6d.; 14s., 11s.; 16s. 9d., 13s.; 16s. 9d., 12s.; 18s. 3d., 13s. 6d.; 19s. 3d., 15s.; 21s. 6d., 15s.; 13s., 7s.; 14s., 7s. 6d.; 20s., 12s. 6d.; 18s. 6d., 12s. 6d.; 17s. 6d., 9s. 6d.; 18s., 12s. The next is a statement showing the reduction per acre on 30 blocks in zone D: 15s., 11s. 6d.; 16s., 12s.; 13s., 11s. 6d.; 15s., 14s.; 15s., 12s.; 22s. 6d., 13s.; 17s. 3d., 12s.; 21s., 12s. 6d.; 18s., 10s.; 17s., 9s. 6d.; 18s., 10s. 6d.; 21s., 12s.; 20s., 12s. 6d.; 20s., 12s. 6d.; 22s. 6d., 11s. 6d.; 23s., 12s. 9d. The next is a statement showing the reduction per acre on 30 blocks in zone E under the proposed zone system: 14s., 7s. 6d.; 16s., 8s.; 18s., 12s. 6d.; 19s., 12s. 6d.; 17s. 9d., 12s. 3d.; 16s., 12s. 6d.; 10s. 6d., 8s. 6d.; 13s., 7s. 6d.; 10s., 9s.; 10s., 8s. 6d.; 15s., 10s. 6d.; 16s. 6d., 8s. 6d.; 18s. 6d., 10s.; 15s., 8s.; 17s., 10s.; 17s., 10s.; 13s. 6d., 6s. 6d.; 17s. 6d., 10s.; 17s. 6d., 10s.; 16s., 8s. Statement showing the reduction of price per acre on 30 blocks in zone F under the proposed zone system: 15s., 9s. 6d.; 27s., 12s.; 16s., 10s.; 19s., 10s. 6d.; 16s., 11s. 6d.; 12s., 8s.; 17s. 6d., 12s.; 20s., 11s. 6d.; 17s., 11s. 6d.; 17s. 6d.,

11s. 9d.; 5s. 6d., 5s.; 14s., 6s. 6d.; 15s., 7s.; 17s., 7s.; 18s., 7s.; 15s., 7s.; 12s., 6s.; 12s., 6s.; 16s., 7s.; 13s., 6s.; 16s., 7s. These are some of the figures which were taken out. In some instances the differences are not so great, but any member may see the list. I have selected those which show the greater disparity but there is a substantial reduction in the vast majority of instances. Members will find that the location numbers run almost consecutively. This statement goes to show that fairly heavy reductions will be made in individual cases. If the State is to lose £30,000 on paper the selectors of Western Australia are going to benefit substantially, that is those whose land was highly priced.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Those are not decided on under the Bill.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is the result of the work of the board.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: You are not forced to adopt it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. member has to trust the Government in that. I think the statement disproves the assertion of Mr. Colebatch that the relief will be effective in only a limited number of cases. The selectors, certainly in a vast majority of cases, will get the land at a price considerably lower than they contracted for. Mr. Colebatch said the policy of the Liberal administration of settling people with little money on the land was altered to the further policy that settlement should be followed up quickly with railways and other facilities. This is very amusing indeed in face of the fact that the present Government have spent between four millions and five millions of money in building railways and providing rolling stock and carrying out improvements to existing lines. The hon. gentleman complains that we have not done more although from time to time in this House he has accused us of being on a financial drunk, to use his exact phrase. Yet in the course of his speech on Thursday, the hon. gentleman's grievance was that we had not continued our drunk and spent more money in the

extension of railways. According to the hon. member we ought not to build railways under the day labour system but should call for tenders and spend money wholesale and provide these facilities, and then we would be doing the right thing, but the hon. member is one who goes round the country urging the restriction of borrowing whereas if we restricted borrowing it would be impossible to carry out his suggestion. When the Government took office, there was a lengthy programme of railways left as a heritage by the previous Government and very little money with which to build them. We had to find the money for the construction of those lines. We did so and not only carried out that lengthy programme of railways, but also brought down several programmes of railways ourselves, got them through Parliament, and carried out the construction of them. Except in a few instances, the whole of our programme has been faithfully carried out and it can be carried out only by borrowing money. Mr. Colebatch said that if the money spent in connection with trading enterprises had been spent in the interests of the agriculturists, all the facilities required by the settlers would be met. As the majority of the public know, the amount of money spent in connection with our trading concerns represents only a few hundred thousand pounds, just a drop in the ocean in comparison with the amount of money we have spent in the development of the agricultural resources of our State.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: You have dropped too much into the ocean; that is the trouble.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Mr. Cullen was anxious to get some information in regard to the extent the prices were increased prior to 1910. I communicated with the Under Secretary for Lands and to-day received the following letter from him:—

Prior to 1910 there was no general increase of prices. C.P. land was generally available under free selection at 10s. an acre, plus survey fees.

Survey before selection was only carried out in special cases; in those cases the prices varied and were often either below or above 10s. an acre. For instance: Locations at Yorkrakine and Baandee were thrown open in 1909 at prices ranging, in the former case from 7s. 3d. to 10s. an acre, and in the latter from 7s. to 17s. an acre. The reason for fixing the date, 1st January, 1910, in the Bill was that during that month regulations came into force which provided for all land being surveyed and classified before selection. The hon. Mr. Johnson's intention, with regard to any of the few cases where land may be found to have been priced too high prior to 1910, was to deal with them under the existing practice of re-classifying land on the application of the selector.

Mr. Patrick stated that Clause 2 confers the same power as the Minister has to-day. That is quite correct: every power asked for under this Bill is possessed by the Government to-day, but the Government could not decently undertake a scheme of this character or magnitude, lowering on a wholesale scale the prices fixed by a previous Administration, without approaching Parliament. That is the proper course to adopt, and I do not think the hon. gentleman would suggest that the Government should have adopted any other course. He said such poison land as was in his district was not worth more than 1s. an acre; that is absolutely correct. The poison land in Mr. Patrick's district would indeed need a fairly substantial bonus to enable a man to get a living from utilising it. It is a totally different class of land from the poison land along the Great Southern. In Mr. Patrick's district the poison land is principally fourth- and fifth-class land; in some cases it is absolutely barren, while in the Great Southern it is mostly first-class land and needs only effective clearing in order to make it productive and capable of being fed profitably by stock. The comparison between the district Mr. Patrick represents and the district to which the Bill prin-

cipally refers will not bear consideration. Mr. Patrick also pointed out that the lessee will be credited at the end of the lease. I have heard that statement made frequently and have seen it in the Press but, after carefully considering this Bill, I cannot find a shadow of ground for its justification. The lessee will be credited straightaway with all the rent that he has paid in excess in the past. I have an illustration here.

Hon. W. Patrick: He will not get the benefit of the credit.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: This is the example of a lease taken up on the 1st July, 1910, containing 676 acres at 16s. reduced to 12s. Total cost under old conditions £540 16s., total cost under new conditions £405 12s., total reduction £135 4s. Under the old conditions the half-yearly rent would be £16 18s. for the first three years, and £28 16s. 6d. for the balance of the term. Under the old conditions £418 0s. 9d. is now payable to complete the purchase money, but this amount would be reduced to £282 16s. 9d. after allowing for a reduction of £135 4s. The amount of £282 16s. 9d. would be payable at the rate of 6d. per acre per annum, viz., £16 18s. per year. So he gets the benefit straightaway, not at the end of his lease, and a substantial reduction it is too, from £28 16s. 6d. to £16 18s. a year. Yet hon. members and public men elsewhere will say that the lessee gets no benefit whatever until towards the termination of his lease. Mr. Patrick pointed out that the land in repurchased estates is not covered by the Bill and said he intended to move a clause that the Bill should apply to those estates. The Agricultural Lands Purchase Act is entirely different in principle from the provisions of the Land Act which deals with conditional purchase. Under the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act, after an estate is acquired, it is paid for out of loan moneys and the Government have to meet the interest on that money, and then under Section 10 set apart public reserves, townsites and other blocks as may be found necessary for such purposes. Section 11 states—

The remainder of the land shall be proclaimed open to selection under the provisions of this Act and any regulations made under it, subject to the following conditions:—(1) The selling price of the land shall be ascertained, by adding a sum equal to one-tenth part of the price actually paid in cash or debentures for the land, and for any improvements made upon it, and the total so arrived at shall be the least aggregate price to be paid by the selectors of the land. (2) The selling price of each allotment shall be fixed by the Governor, but so that the aggregate price for all the allotments into which the land is divided shall not be less than that hereinbefore prescribed, payable in twenty yearly instalments, or sooner, if required by the selector.

There is provision that interest shall be paid. The first year's instalment, at the rate of £7 12s. 10d. for each £100 of the selling price, must accompany the application; and the applicant is to pay £7 12s. 10d. annually for each £100 of the purchase money. That payment represents interest and part of the principal, the object being that when the Government have expended public funds in purchasing estates, reclassifying and subdividing them, they shall get the whole of the money back and shall be able to meet not only the interest but also the principal.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Has not that been repealed?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No; not that section.

Hon. W. Patrick: Are you reading from the 1909 Act?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No; from the 1906 Act.

Hon. W. Patrick: That is repealed.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Whether the Act of 1906 has been repealed or not, these sections are preserved in the existing measure. The purchaser has to pay interest and principal.

Hon. C. Sommers: How long do the Government hold the land before throwing it open to selection?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have not gone into that aspect of the question, but I quite agree with Mr. Patrick that these selectors are carrying very heavy burdens indeed. The remedy, however, which the hon. member suggests will be by no means sufficient—extending the terms of purchase to 30 years.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: These people are already under the Land Act.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The provisions I refer to still exist. Let us take the case of a man without capital, or with very little capital, taking up 1,000 acres of land; and it will be admitted, I think, that 1,000 acres is little enough for successfully carrying on agricultural operations. In some cases the land has been sold at about £4 per acre, but I will take a case where it has been sold at £3. That would represent a total of £3,000. I have made a calculation from which I find that such a man would have to furnish in interest and principal no less a sum than £229 5s. annually. There are many such cases, and I do not think that to extend the term of repayment to 30 years would be very much of a concession. The man would still have to pay the interest on the £3,000. It appears to me that the time is coming when the matter must be dealt with on other lines, and that the State must be prepared to suffer a considerable loss.

[Hon. W. Kingsmill took the Chair.]

Hon. J. F. Cullen: They could not come under this one proposal?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: They could not come under this Bill at all. It would be entirely out of place. I hope Mr. Patrick will not move his amendment. A remedy must be devised, and it is the intention of the Government to go into the question.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: Will the Government promise to deal with it?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Government have already promised to go into the matter and endeavour to find some way out of the difficulty. There is no doubt of the necessity for doing so. Mr. Patrick says that unless the reduced prices are embodied in an Act

there is no guarantee that they will follow. As I have already said, the House must trust the Government. If hon. members do not trust the Government, then it only remains to point out that even the insertion of the schedule in the measure would not be enough. The insertion of the schedule would fail to achieve the purpose.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: We may have a change of Government.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: If hon. members distrust the Government, the only course will be to insist that the number and the price of every block, together with the name of the owner if it has been sold, shall be inserted in a schedule to this Bill. What is the reason for hon. members' distrust?

Hon. C. F. Baxter: There is no distrust.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The insertion of the schedule would absolutely fail to achieve its purpose, because those zones could be varied without the slightest difficulty if the Government desired it, though they would not dream of doing such a thing. I think Mr. Patrick stated—though this has nothing whatever to do with the Bill—that the railway rates on Collie coal were not raised because the people of Collie were supporters of the Government.

Hon. W. Patrick: I did not say that.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. member said something very like it. The people who complained, and the people who took action, were not supporters of the Government, but opponents of the Government—the mine owners. The mine owners approached the Premier. He was not approached by the Collie supporters of the present Government. I have dealt with the same matter in this House previously, and I think it is most unfair that statements of that character should be made, statements absolutely devoid of foundation. I hope hon. members will not insist on introducing into this Bill amendments which cannot be accepted.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: But that does not apply to all amendments.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The effect of introducing amendments may be to defeat the Bill, and I hope that position will not be brought about. The measure has been fully considered in another place, and it can be fully considered here; but, as I have already said, this is a Bill for the re-pricing of land, and that is quite sufficient to undertake at the present time. So much having been accomplished, it will be for hon. members to agitate for other concessions if these are deemed necessary.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: What part of this Bill refers to re-pricing?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The whole object of this Bill is re-pricing. The Bill gives the Government power to re-price, and the Government state that they intend to re-price. The whole measure is worthless unless the House has confidence in the Government and believes that they will carry out their expressed intentions. As I said at the opening of these remarks, it is quite evident that Mr. Cornell has a strong majority in favour of his amendment, if only he carries it to a division. I am sorry Mr. Cornell is not in his place to-night.

Amendment (six months) put and negatived.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—PERTH MUNICIPAL GAS AND ELECTRIC LIGHTING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Hon. A. G. JENKINS (Metropolitan) [9.10] in moving the second reading said: When the Perth City Council took over the gas company's business, the Act of 1911 was passed. The electric lighting department was subsequently carried on as a separate department from the Perth City Council. Unfortunately, that position did not hold good when the Act of 1911 was passed, or the position might have been provided for then. Great inconvenience in regard to the signing of cheques has arisen through the elec-

tric lighting department being carried on practically as a separate concern. Whenever cheques need signing—and they have to be signed daily—the mayor and the town clerk and the treasurer have to be waited on for that purpose. This Bill is introduced simply in order to empower the mayor and the general manager of the electric lighting department and the accountant of that department to sign cheques. It is introduced at the request of the Perth City Council, and has passed another place without amendment. It will be a great convenience, and will enable the work to be carried out more expeditiously.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: Does not Clause 4 include Clause 3?

Hon. A. G. JENKINS: No. Clause 4 has to be inserted because it incorporates Part XXV. of the Municipal Corporations Act, providing for the keeping of proper books and accounts. The Bill is purely a formal measure. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etcetera.

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

Read a third time and passed.

House adjourned at 9.15 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 2nd November, 1915.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 3 p.m., and read prayers.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Premier: 1, State Trading Concerns, progress of audit of accounts for year ended 30th June, 1915 (asked for by Hon. Frank Wilson). 2, Papers re case of Hugh McLeod (ordered on motion by Mr. Smith).

By the Attorney General: 1, Particulars of loans from Supreme Court funds (asked for by Mr. Smith). 2, Report on inspection of liquors for year ended 30th June, 1915.

By the Minister for Mines and Water Supply: 1, Amendment of by-laws, Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage, and Drainage Department. 2, Papers re grant of special lease at Kalgoorlie to W.A. Trotting Association (ordered on motion by Mr. Smith).

QUESTION—STATE HOTELS, PURCHASE OF COMMODITIES.

Mr. FOLEY (for Mr. O'Loughlen) asked the Attorney General: 1, Is he aware that commodities required for the State hotels can be supplied by the local traders? 2, Why, therefore, should these supplies be brought from Perth, thus retarding the development of country centres?