

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Government ought to be ashamed to bring down a Bill of this kind at this stage, seeing they have increased the tariff at State hotels. Of course the commissioner might be able to reduce that again. The result, however, has been that the tariff at most of the hotels throughout the State has been increased. Fancy the Government adding 20 per cent. to their hotel tariff and now asking the right to fix charges against other people!

The Minister for Justice: The hon. member knows that the price of board and lodging in this State is incomparably smaller than in other States.

The CHAIRMAN: I hope the hon. member is not going to discuss State hotels.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The commissioner can fix the price.

The CHAIRMAN: Not under this clause.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Perhaps not the tariff of State hotels, but of all hotels. The Government cannot deal with other than the food of the people without doing incalculable harm. We had price fixing when it was considered necessary and would have it again if the people were being exploited, but people for the most part can protect themselves except in the matter of food. I do not know that the State should incur the expense of keeping a commissioner inquiring into the price of commodities.

The Minister for Justice: That will not be done.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Then the measure is not needed. A good many appointments have been made by the present Government and I think I shall ask for a return of all appointments made during the last four years carrying salaries of over £400 a year. We do not want any more such appointments. If the Minister is not content to confine the measure to food prices, we should deny him any legislation at all.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	12
Noes	..	..	..	19
				—
Majority against	..			7
				—

AYES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Richardson
Mr. Brown	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Davy	Mr. Taylor
Mr. Lindsay	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Maley	Mr. Thomson
Sir James Mitchell	Mr. North

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Cheason	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Clydesdale	Mr. McCallum
Mr. Corboy	Mr. Millington
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Munsie
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Rowe
Miss Holman	Mr. A. Wansbrough
Mr. Kenneally	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Withers
Mr. Lamond	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Lutey	

(Teller.)

PAIR.

AYE.	NO.
Mr. J. M. Smith	Mr. Troy

Amendment thus negatived.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.30 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 16th October, 1928.

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

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT.

THE PRESIDENT: I have received from the Auditor-General, in pursuance of Section 53 of the Audit Act, 1904, the 38th Report for the financial year ended the 30th June, 1928, which I now lay on the Table of the House.

BILL—ABATTOIRS ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and returned to the Assembly with an amendment.

BILL—FERTILISERS.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—RAILWAYS DISCONTINUANCE.

Second reading.

Debate resumed from the 10th October.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West—in reply) [4.35]: This Bill has evoked considerable discussion. A good deal of what has been said has taken the form of criticism of the Government for suggesting that lines which are not at present paying, and which would cost a considerable sum of money to put into proper order for the running of trains, should be pulled up.

Hon. E. H. El Hall: A sort of funeral dirge.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: That is a good description of some of the remarks that have been made. It is very nice to think that members representing a particular division should, from sentiment, claim that a railway line which has been laid for many years, and has given good service in the district, should be allowed to remain, rather than that it should be pulled up and used in some other part of the country.

Hon. H. Seddon: Are you going to use it?

THE HONORARY MINISTER: Yes. The probability is that the Kanowna rails will be used for some agricultural lines. The rails in the Lakeside line are of very little use except for sidings, and they may be used for that purpose or sold. In dealing with the remarks of different members I should like to give the following information to the House with regard to the Lakeside-White Hope railway. Mr. Holmes wanted to know what its original cost to the Government was. This was £18,661 5s. 8d. The line was purchased with the object of serving Hampton Plains during what was known as the boom period. It has resulted in considerable loss to the Government. The firewood company which was operating the line at the time did not make it pay. If they could not do so, under the conditions which have been described

by one member, it was not possible for the Government to succeed. Mr. Harris had much to say about the Kanowna line. It is true when the Bill was before us in 1923, and again last year, the plea was put forward that there was a possibility of developments in the district which would necessitate the use of that railway. Unfortunately for Mr. Harris, during the whole of the period there has been no demand for the line, and very little traffic has passed over it. In view of the heavy cost that will be necessary to put the line into proper condition, particularly when it is remembered that the possible revenue is estimated at only £30 per annum, I cannot see that Mr. Harris is justified in claiming that the line should be allowed to remain there in the hope that at some time in the future the traffic will be sufficient to make it a payable proposition. To bring that line up to Government standard would cost something like £8,000. The Commissioner for Railways has definitely stated he is not prepared to run any more trains on the line unless it is re-sleepered. From the business point of view no member would contemplate the expenditure of approximately £8,000 against an estimated revenue for the year of between £30 and £40. The Bill is before the House with the object of having these rails made use of instead of their being allowed to rot. I do not think any body of men would be justified in taking any action other than is proposed in the Bill. Mr. Harris also referred to the Bunbury line, and wanted to know why it was not included in the Bill. I am informed there is a rebuilding programme at that centre. The racecourse may be used for the purpose of storing material for some months, and consequently that line has not been included. It cannot be used for public traffic.

Hon. W. J. Mann: We pointed out last time the use to which that line could be put, but you would not listen to us.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: The line cannot be used for public traffic unless it is brought up to Government standard, at considerable expense. Mr. Seddon desired to know whether this was an ordinary bookkeeping Bill, or whether it was a fact that the Kanowna line would subsequently be re-sleepered. I have answered his query. The Kanowna line would have to be re-sleepered, and the White Hope line would

have to be relaid as well as re-sleepered before it could be used for public traffic. It would be an impossible proposition for the Government to put either of these lines into good condition in view of the present circumstances. Mr. Brown compared Government lines with a private line with which he was well acquainted some years ago. His description of the running of the private line makes me think of Dark Town methods, to which no Government would subscribe in the running of railways.

Hon. J. R. Brown: They get a lot of money out of such lines.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The present Government at all events would not subscribe to such conditions as he outlined. He described a train running with a 300-ton load, and the men working on the train ready to jump off at any moment. He outlined what had been happening, according to his version, in the years gone by. I suggest, however, that if the Government were to adopt methods such as he described, members of this Chamber would be the first to criticise Ministers for not maintaining the line up to a proper standard and for allowing employees to run the risks that were indicated by Mr. Brown. Mr. Cornell took exception to certain figures I quoted when I introduced the Bill. He suggested that I put forward the capital cost of the railways and the interest on that capital cost, as justification for the discontinuance of the Kanowna line. I merely placed those figures before members so that they would understand the financial phase of the question. It was information that should have been placed before members and it was certainly not advanced in justification of the proposal to pull up the line. There is no other justification for the proposal at the present time than that the lines are in such a bad condition that an expenditure of thousands of pounds would be required to put them in proper order. The revenue is so small that even if the lines were put in proper order they would not pay axle grease. Mr. Cornell also suggested the Bill was not a good advertisement for the State, or for the Government, who, he said, claim to have done so much for the mining industry. The Government have done as much as any other Government in the interests of the mining industry, and I can quote the Lakeside line as indicating something that the Government were prepared to do in the interests

of mining when the Hampton Plains boom took place. That demonstrated that the Government were prepared to act, and I have no hesitation in saying that wherever there is a possibility of mines being properly worked, or of being opened up, the Government are prepared to give favourable consideration to the provision of railways, roads, or whatever other facilities are deemed necessary. I am aware that Mr. Cornell struck a very happy thought when he suggested that the Kanowna pug might yet prove of great value to the State, in which event the railway would be necessary. That was merely a happy argument to bolster up his opposition, based mostly on sentimental reasons, to the pulling up of the Kanowna line. Rather than allow the rails to remain on the ground and rust away, the department wish to utilise them in constructing another line to open up new agricultural country in other parts of the State. The rails used in the 12-mile length of the Kanowna railway are of 60-lbs., and the value of that length of track, apart from points and crossings, and allowing for depreciation, is placed at £11,500. In view of the position of the State at the present time, I think it is a reasonable proposition that railway material of such a value should be taken away and used in opening up a new portion of the agricultural belt.

Hon. Sir William Lathlain: Do you propose to charge that amount up to whatever railway is constructed with it?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes.

Hon. Sir William Lathlain: You are cancelling everything under the Bill, the value of the rails and so forth.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes, so far as the railways mentioned are concerned, but when the rails are used in the construction of other lines elsewhere in the State, and those railways are handed over to the Railway Department, then the railways will again be responsible for the interest on the lines when they are working. If the Bill is passed, the Railway Department will not be responsible for some of the interest they have to pay at present, but they will be responsible for interest chargeable on rails used in the construction of other lines. The amount written off the interest charges against the railways will be much less than some hon. members suggest. In these days it is time the Government practised economy in

every possible direction, and in view of the necessity for the construction of a considerable length of agricultural railways in the near future, I do not think members of this Chamber would be doing right if they refused to give the Government authority to use the rails, now lying useless in the Kanowna line, for the purposes I have outlined. My remarks, I think, meet the objection raised by Mr. Lovekin, although he suggested it would be hardly a fair thing that the Railway Department should be relieved of all liability regarding the cost of the Kanowna line. I would like to mention that the capital cost of the railway is not written down by the amount contributed to sinking fund and I do not think it would be sound finance if that course were adopted. I do not know of any railway service in the world that has adopted that practice. The results of the operations of our railways can be perused in the annual report of the Commissioner of Railways. From that report it will be seen that provision is made for the continued payment of interest on the actual capital outlay, although that outlay may have been repaid over and over again. Any profit made by the railways is not retained by the department but is paid into Consolidated Revenue. In the event of the State being put to the expense of reconditioning the Kanowna or the Lakeside line, the money necessary will have to come out of revenue, and not from loan funds. That is an additional reason why the Bill should be agreed to. As to the suggestions made by Mr. Miles that the freight on wool and petrol should be reduced, while the freight on timber, coal and such like commodities should be increased, his remarks were brought under the notice of the experts of the department who advise me that the suggestions are not practicable from a railway point of view. I am informed that the railway practice all over the world is to base freights on the value of the material carried, and therefore it would not be an economical proposition for the department to do as Mr. Miles suggests so that the railways may secure the small proportion of freight that is now carried over the roads by motor transport.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Then you seek to encourage motor transport as against the railways?

The HONORARY MINISTER: No; it is merely a question of successfully running our railways and providing efficient service. I have no doubt that the railway experts have gone into the matter thoroughly, and at any rate, the results of their consideration have been placed before me in the form I have already indicated. I admit that it is unfortunate that such a Bill has to be introduced, because no member would willingly agree to the pulling up of any railway unless it was absolutely necessary. The expert advice tendered to the Government, however, is as reliable as any that can be procured, and, in view of the whole of the circumstances, we had no option but to ask Parliament to agree to this legislation. If the Government are to be permitted to do their best in the interests of the agricultural and mining districts, the House should permit the Government to make use of rails that are now lying uselessly on the ground. As a matter of fact, if the Bill is not agreed to, it simply means that members decree that the rails shall remain on the ground to rust rather than be used in the construction of railways to open up other parts of the State.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Why not take power to use the rails without actually closing the line?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I do not know that that would carry us any further. If the rails are to be used elsewhere they will not be available for the particular districts referred to in the Bill. On the other hand, should there be any development that is worth while in connection with the mining or agricultural areas, the Government will always be prepared to do what is possible to assist in the development of the districts affected. Whenever any such occasion has arisen during the last four or five years, the Government have shown that they have been prepared, even at some financial sacrifice, to render the necessary assistance.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Have you any information regarding the Sandstone line?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I have not been able, in the limited time at my disposal, to obtain all the particulars that Mr. Seddon asked for, but I am advised that there is a difference between the Sandstone line and those referred to in the Bill. The length of the Sandstone line is 90 miles and there are recent pastoral developments

on either side of the railway and also beyond it. Further than that, trains are run over the line periodically.

Hon. H. Seddon: Once a fortnight.

The HONORARY MINISTER: That is correct. While the line is not a paying one, it cannot be placed in the same category as the Kanowna and Lakeside lines.

Hon. E. H. Harris: If the line is spiked over like the others, it will be in the same position.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The difference is that the Sandstone line is fit to be used, and we are, in fact, using the line once a fortnight. On the other hand, if the Sandstone line were in the same condition as the Kanowna line or the Lakeside line, the Commissioner of Railways would be compelled to take the same action as has been taken with reference to the lines covered by the Bill. At the same time, I can inform hon. members that the position regarding the Sandstone line is receiving the consideration of the department. For the time being, owing to the development that has taken place in the country through which the line passes, it is not intended to take any action. I do not know that I need say any more in support of the Bill, beyond to stress the point that it will be in the interests of the State if Parliament allows the Government to do as is suggested and use the rails in the construction of lines elsewhere.

Question put and passed

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan in the Chair; the Honorary Minister in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Power to discontinue certain railways:

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I move an amendment—

That all the words after "be" in line 2 be struck out, and the following inserted in lieu:—"operated until the Government otherwise declares, and the material thereof may be used in the construction of any other authorised railway."

The amendment will accomplish two purposes. It will leave the route in such a condition that at any time it may be put to use again by merely using the same earth-

works and putting down rails. In the second place, the amendment will enable the Government to do what the Minister desires. It will prevent the rails from being left in the ground to rust away. The other evening Mr. Cornell rather impressed me by stating what I believe to be a fact. There are vast quantities of what is known as Kanowna pug in this district. The pug is gold bearing, but up to the present time it has not been possible to treat it. In these days, however, science is making rapid strides and there is no telling what chemists can do. I had an experience of that myself when it was stated that it was impossible to bleach jarrah for the purpose of making white paper. We had a laboratory here and by persistence and some hundreds of experiments it was found that jarrah could be bleached perfectly white. Unfortunately the proposition was not commercially sound, but, it having been discovered that jarrah could be bleached white, it remains for the future to prove that the bleaching can be done commercially. Since Mr. Cornell spoke I have taken some little interest in this matter. I am loath to see railway lines pulled up in gold-bearing areas. I spoke to Dr. Saw, who is Chancellor of the University, and he was good enough to agree to lend his aid in the direction of seeing what could be done by way of experiment at the University with what might yet prove to be a vast source of wealth. I also asked another hon. member of this Chamber, Mr. Brown, to be good enough to get some samples of Kanowna pug to submit to the University professors, and Mr. Brown agreed to do so. That is the reason why we should not altogether scrap this railway. Whilst I agree, on economical grounds, that it is desirable to take up lines such as these and reconstruct them in agricultural areas, we should arrange these things so that in the event of future gold discoveries it will be possible by departmental Act to relay the line.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The amendment follows on the lines of the interjection I made whilst the Honorary Minister was addressing the House. If we preserve the line as a railway line, the Government will be given the opportunity to use the rails in some other district where they will be of immediate service. There is no need to introduce a measure to discontinue this line and close it for practically all time. The

route can remain and the earthworks can be utilised again. The amendment will accomplish a desirable purpose, and therefore it should appeal to the Minister. It may be necessary to alter the title of the Bill because if the amendment be carried it will merely provide for the cessation of operations.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I ask the Minister what amount of interest is debited by the Railway Department against the Kanowna line? If the amendment is carried will it not mean that interest will still be debited? If that should be so, it will be hardly fair to the department. We look to the Railway Department to keep everything in order, and if we are going to saddle them with lines that are no longer in existence—

Hon. A. Lovekin: The interest will have to be paid all the same.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: We shall be putting the department in the position of having dead lines on which interest will have to be paid without any chance of recovering it.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The argument used that if the amendment is carried the Government will be able to utilise the earthworks on some future occasion, should not carry much weight; there are practically no earthworks in connection with this line. If there should be any development in the Kanowna district, it is not claimed that it will take place at that particular spot.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Suppose the pug is successfully treated?

The HONORARY MINISTER: We may have to wait a number of years before the experiments prove successful. If it should be necessary to do so, the Government that may be in power will surely see that the necessary facilities are provided. The amount of interest debited against the Railway Department at the present time on account of the Kanowna line is £2,300 per annum. If the amendment is carried, it would mean that the department will have to meet that charge each year notwithstanding any surplus they may have had from that line. If the Railway Department is to be saddled with interest on lines not in use, lines that have been discontinued for years, it will mean that in the course of time it will be impossible for the railways to show a fair return for the capital invested. Then will be created another position that will

enable some members to say that the Railway Department is not paying and is not being run satisfactorily. All the same, there may be a lot in the argument in connection with the treatment of pug and the possibility of success at some future time. Still, it will not be possible to use the earthworks, because they do not exist. In respect of the Lakeside line, at the best it is only a bush line.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Portion of it.

The HONORARY MINISTER: From Lakeside onwards. If the amendment is carried, both lines will be placed in the same position. Whatever earthworks are there are of practically no value.

Hon. E. H. Harris: There are no earthworks at all.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The sole effect of the amendment will be that the Railway Department will be saddled with the payment of interest charges of which the department should be relieved.

Hon. J. R. BROWN: The amendment will carry out just what the Bill proposes. The rails will be taken up, but the earthworks are up to mud—there is nothing of them. In all probability grass and trees will grow on the track after the rails have been removed. In the event of Kanowna pug being treated successfully at some future date, and it being necessary to lay the rails again, the same track will be used. The amendment will merely have the effect of carrying out what the Government desire.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I cannot follow the Honorary Minister's argument. This seems to be a Bill to make the railways pay on paper, by scrapping some of them and putting the loss on to revenue. The result will be to swell the deficit by loading it with a lot of assets of no value whatever. Then we shall be borrowing to pay the deficit. The Railway Department have received the profits from this line, and have in fact been recouped all the capital expenditure. Now that times have changed, the department want to get rid of the incubus and put it on to general revenue. The Honorary Minister admits that the rails have a value of £11,000 odd. I do not know what may be the cost of the earthworks and other equipment, such as telephone poles; but that cost alone will be borne by the Railway Department. It may not be a bad asset, because no one knows when the time may come for putting down the line again. I have hopes of the pug

being treated, and am quite willing to contribute towards the cost of carrying out experiments. I object, however, to the Railway Department dealing with an asset while it is profitable, and, as soon as it becomes unprofitable, turning it over to the tender mercies of the Treasurer.

Hon. E. H. Harris: What has been done with the profits in the past?

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: It is said that they have gone into general revenue, but for many years they were going to meet the deficits resulting from the running of other railways. My amendment will make no difference whatever to any agricultural line which may need the rails.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Mr. Lovekin mentioned the huge profits made out of the Kanowna line in the past.

Hon. A. Lovekin: They did not go into the Treasury. They went into the general pool to support non-paying agricultural lines.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: We know that putting out developmental agricultural lines means that the State must lose money in the first instance.

Hon. A. Lovekin: But the revenue never got the returns from the Kanowna line, and now you want to put the cost of that line on the revenue.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The Kanowna line helped to meet the deficits incurred on other lines.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	11
Noes	..	..	..	9

Majority for .. 2

AYES.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall
Hon. E. H. Harris
Hon. G. A. Kempton
Hon. A. Lovekin
Hon. W. J. Mann
Hon. G. W. Miles

Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. E. Rose
Hon. A. J. H. Saw
Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. J. R. Brown
(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter
Hon. J. M. Drew
Hon. J. T. Franklin
Hon. E. H. Gray
Hon. V. Hamersley

Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. Sir W. Latblain
Hon. C. H. Wittenoom
Hon. G. Fraser
(Teller.)

Amendment thus passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule—agreed to.

Title:

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: In view of Mr. Lovekin's amendment in Clause 2, I move an amendment to the Title—

That after the word "of" there be inserted "the operation of," and that the words "and for other purposes" be added to the Title.

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

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—WHEAT BAGS.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

MOTION—COLLIE POWER SCHEME.

Debate resumed from the 3rd October on the following motion by Hon. J. Ewing:—

That in the opinion of this House the Government should forthwith proceed to establish in the Collie Coalfields Area a generating plant capable of supplying electrical current for lighting and motive power throughout the whole or the greater portion of the State.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [5.31]: I think Mr. Ewing might well be commended on having brought this motion before the House, for it is a subject of growing importance, not only to this State but to all States desirous of making progress. It is not my intention to traverse any technical ground in relation to the establishment of a national power scheme. Mr. Ewing fairly comprehensively covered a great deal of that ground, and perhaps I might be in danger of getting into deep water if I began to deal with volts, amps., and kilowatts, and so I will leave them to other members who know more about the technical side of the subject than I do. In Western Australia, almost since the inception of the State, we have had to face big schemes, and so this scheme of a national power supply should not be permitted to deter the Government. In the very early days we had to set about getting water supplies, and afterwards to establish the wheat industry. Subsequently we had to put out railways all over the State, and later we had to endeavour to establish the dairying industry. We have since been faced with the task of building harbours and equipping them for the transport of

produce that we shall be growing in the very near future. Now a great many people in this State, I, amongst them, feel that the time has arrived when the Government should pay some attention to the matter of providing cheap motive power in order that we can establish secondary industries and at the same time assist rural industries throughout the country. The question of national power on a large scale has been and is in the front rank of the problems of most countries. At the present day production on a big scale is largely governed by the availability of cheap electric energy. Strange to say, no matter how much cheap electric power has been supplied in a given centre, I have yet to find any instance where it has reached saturation point in respect of demand. Every authority I have read seems to point to the fact that the demand is keeping well ahead of the supply in almost every instance and in almost every country. The position in which we find ourselves in this State is that we should take a little retrospect and see for ourselves whether we did a wise thing in establishing the power house at East Perth. Personally I think that was a very wrong step and that we have been moving on a wrong basis ever since. On the other hand, we should look forward with the idea of establishing a power supply that would not only be satisfactory to the present generation, but would be a basis for generations to come. We know the metropolis will always be a big factor in the consumption of electric power, but I very much doubt whether it can be satisfactorily established that it is economically sound that the primary raw material should be hauled 125 miles for the generation of electric current. I would point out that it is not only a matter of hauling coal 125 miles from Collie; it is more like a haulage of 250 miles, because by reason of the peculiar trucks used for the hauling of coal, all the rolling stock has to be returned empty. So there is not only 125 miles of haulage to the metropolis, but there is 125 miles of dead haulage in order to take the rolling stock back. I should say that to perpetuate this idea is in direct conflict with what is being done in other countries.

Hon. E. H. Harris: An economic waste.

Hon. W. J. MANN: It is positively an economic waste. Progressive people of other countries have adopted the scheme of generating electric current at the source of

the primary power. The success that has attended their efforts is such that so far as I have been able to read, none of them has been able to keep any distance ahead of the demand. The main consideration in respect of cheap current is its availability for secondary and rural industries. Moreover, by reason of generating current at the pit's mouth, there is immunity from outside influences, such as strikes, that might interfere with the supply of coal from the mines to a distant generating plant. In the session before last Mr. Lovekin quoted some illuminating figures from America and Canada regarding the transmission of electric motive power. Reading through an electrical paper here the other day I noticed that in Toronto one board alone is supplying current and covering the services of no fewer than 400 local bodies. I do not know the distance over which that current is transmitted, for it is not recorded here, but I should say it must have been very considerable in order to take in the number of municipalities and other local authorities enumerated. I have also read of many similar schemes in Europe, and I think it was Mr. Ewing who referred to the big project that has been launched in Britain for extensive power schemes there. Mr. Ewing also referred extensively to Yallourn. I do not intend to follow him very far in that connection, but I wish to say that at Yallourn to-day they are successfully transmitting current to Albury, 178 miles, Corowa 165 miles, Echuca 196 miles, and to a hundred other places without any appreciable degree of loss, if we are to believe the reports of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Have you any idea of the loss of current over such long distances?

Hon. W. J. MANN: I have not, but I understand from its omission from this report that it must be very small, otherwise there would be some mention made of it. I notice that in another portion of the report reference is made to the supplying of the cities of Ballarat and Bendigo, and the Commission frankly guarantee to supply them without loss in transit. Ballarat, I think, is 75 miles away, while Bendigo is 100 miles away. Some member recently mentioned in the House what has been done in New Zealand. May I refer briefly to an article that appeared in the "Electrical Times" of

27th June last. Alluding to electrical development in New Zealand the writer of this article states:—

After pointing out that the electric supply in the Dominion of New Zealand is in the following ratio:—Hydro, 74.53 per cent.; steam, 23.20 per cent.; gas 1.42 per cent.; and oil, 0.85 per cent. Mr G—, manager of the South Canterbury Power Board in an article in "Board and Council," deals with Power Board development in the Dominion. The capital invested in electrical undertakings, he writes, is approximately £19,000,000, made up of: Government, £7,000,000; local bodies connected with Government supply, £8,250,000 and local bodies not connected with Government supply, £3,750,000. Ninety per cent. of the population of the Dominion are within the area of electric supply authorities, and over two-thirds of this number are within electric-power districts. Distribution lines erected total 15,000 route miles, supplying 228,000 consumers, being an average of 15.2 consumers per mile of line. Several power districts, however, only average about four consumers per mile, and in some rural districts the average drops to two consumers per mile. As far as financial results are concerned, it is early to form definite conclusions, as so many power boards have not completed reticulation. Of the 34 power boards functioning in 1927, six collected a rate, and 13 showed a loss.

In this connection I interpose a remark made by Mr. W. J. Holdsworth, chairman of the Auckland Power Board, who expressed the opinion that there were too many power boards operating in the dominion and that the time was ripe for a separate Government department for the control of national power development. The article on "Electrical Development in New Zealand" stated inter alia—

In the dairying districts current is ousting fuel as power for milking. In 1923 there were 1,310 milking machines using current, and in 1927 the number had increased to 6,738.

So much for New Zealand, which country is often held up to us as an illustration of what we should do in the way of production, both secondary and rural. The Commissioner of Railways in this State, in his report for the year ended 30th June last, strongly urged the extension of the East Perth power scheme. From that report I gather that the position in the metropolitan area is fairly serious and that something will have to be done to cope with the demand for electrical current. I am not going to be so foolish as to say that the Commissioner's request should not be acceded to, but I wish to point out that, in acceding to the request, we shall be ac-

centuating the wrong system that we have been following for some time. While relief will have to be given, the Government might, at the same time, be urged to look a little further ahead and ensure that there is not a recurrence of the present serious position in the course of another year or two. Assuredly that is what will happen, and so long as we continue on the present lines, we shall get nowhere and will be the subject of derision and scorn from those who come after us. Mr. Ewing spoke of the desirability of Collie as a centre for distributing electrical power. I fully concur with him in that statement, not because I am one of the representatives of that district but because it is the only district at present offering for the purpose. In my opinion Collie is ideally situated. Its geographical position is such that, taking the 200 miles range of Victoria's successful transmission, a similar air line from Collie would include Perth 100 miles, Northam 125 miles, Albany 150 miles, Merredin 175 miles, Narembeen 200 miles, Wongan Hills 200 miles, and Moora 200 miles, and Southern Cross could be reached in 230 miles.

Hon. J. Nicholson: From Collie?

Hon. W. J. MANN: Yes, by air line.

Hon. C. F. Baxter. Narembeen is surely much nearer to Collie than is Merredin.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I approached a source which I considered should be reliable on the question of air line distances, and those are the figures supplied to me. I do not say that Mr. Baxter is wrong. Perhaps he might look at the figures and, if any of them is wrong, correct it. The mere fact of one being wrong, however, does not alter the principle. The situation of Collie is such that it is much better able to radiate electric current in all directions from that town than from Perth, because Perth would have at least one dead side, namely, the seaward side. In addition, there is the supply of raw material at the pit's mouth in favour of Collie. Last night it was my privilege to attend underground in the Collie Proprietary mine a banquet tendered to the visiting journalists, and it was there stated authoritatively that the surveys of coal already made indicate that there are 500 million tons of coal to be won within a radius of 40 miles. Therefore neither the present generation nor the next half-dozen

generations have need to worry about the coal supply. Five hundred million tons is rather more than enough to supply the needs of several generations. The raw material is there and the water supply is there. With my two colleagues I visited the Minninup Pool yesterday and gave attention to the question of water supply. On the authority of the Rev. Father Brodie we found that where we had computed the depth of the pool at 40 feet it was 60 feet, and in some parts 90 feet. Father Brodie himself had measured it. With a length of four miles and a width in places of a quarter of a mile, any question of the pool not providing sufficient water supply for an electrical scheme can be ruled out for all time.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Is it good fresh water?

Hon. W. J. MANN: Perfectly fresh and good, and in fact is used for human consumption.

Hon. G. Fraser: That is only about two miles from the town itself.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Yes. I take it as being of the highest significance that the Federal Government have realised that to further national development something must be done to provide cheap motive power throughout the Commonwealth. I propose to read what Mr. Bruce said in his speech the other day when referring to power schemes—

The question of the provision of cheap and ample supplies of power, the Government also consider, should be discussed between the Commonwealth and the States. The provision of such a supply of power is, under modern conditions, essential if a nation is to achieve true efficiency. In Australia we have many sources of electrical power, but at the present time those sources are being developed by individual States according to no defined and co-ordinated plan. To sum up, our view is that the functions of the Governments, Federal and State, ought to be used to try to give direction and leadership to our industrial and economic life. Our policy is not to interfere with but to co-operate with the Governments of the States; not to establish governmental enterprise but to encourage and assist private enterprise in every legitimate way; not to build up a Government bureaucracy but to assist and encourage the citizens of this Commonwealth to help themselves in their task of peopling and developing this country.

In that speech Mr. Bruce raised the question of private enterprise, but I do not propose to touch on that at present. I do

say, however, it is very significant that the Federal Government realise the necessity for cheap power and recognise that Australia can never be made a nation unless we secure cheap motive power. There is a great demand for cheap electric energy throughout the State, and there is no opportunity in rural districts to establish secondary industries unless they can get it. At York consumers of electricity are being charged 10d. for light and 10d. for power. How in the world a business man at York can manage to carry on against competition in Perth, where power may be obtained at about 1½d., I do not know. It is an absolute bar to any progress in the country. There are many other towns in which the people have to pay 9d., and in the town where I live we have to pay 6d. for current that our competitors in Perth can get for 1½d.

Hon. V. Hamersley: Is not Bunbury putting in an oil scheme instead of using Collie coal?

Hon. W. J. MANN: The authorities of Bunbury do not seem to know just what they are doing at present. They have been negotiating for a long time and are still negotiating. I should prefer to see Bunbury take power from a Collie scheme, use the product God has given us and provide labour for our own people rather than take the product of a country where black or cheap labour is the order of the day.

Hon. G. Fraser: Where does the town of York get its power?

Hon. W. J. MANN: I do not know, but I know 10d. is the price. In some of the small towns the price of current for lighting is 1s. 6d. I have a list of all the small schemes in Australia and New Zealand, together with their charges. That information is available to any member who would like to see it. I heartily endorse Mr. Ewing's proposal and I trust the House will show its approbation by giving it a unanimous vote in order that the Government and the people may feel that this Chamber at any rate realises the need for the provision of this very necessary factor of national progress.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

BILL—DOG ACT AMENDMENT.*Second Reading.*

HON. C. F. BAXTER (East) [5.57] in moving the second reading said: This Bill, which seeks to amend the law of 1903, is not new to this Chamber. We had a Bill on the same lines before us last year. That Bill passed this Chamber but came to a sad end in another place. In 1919 we had an amending measure 'before the House, but that dealt with the registration of dogs. This Bill is on all fours with that of last year and seeks to deal with a very serious situation. There are three sections of people particularly interested in this measure. First of all are the people who ridicule the Bill and say it is not needed. The existing Act is 25 years old, and while it was doubtless suitable to meet the needs at the time it was passed, circumstances have altered greatly meanwhile and it is recognised that amendment of the law is urgently needed. So those people content themselves with ridiculing the Bill and passing it on one side. Such people have no true knowledge of existing conditions and the damage being done, which damage, resulting in a tremendous loss of stock, cannot be ignored by the owners who suffer. There is another section of the community who, for sentimental reasons alone, consider that this amendment should not be made. To a large extent we are all sentimental, especially when dealing with those noble and best of man's friends, the horse and the dog. Sentiment, however, can be carried too far. I admit that even the hardest-hearted man is capable of being carried away by sentiment, not only for a particularly well-bred dog but even for a faithful mongrel. Sentiment should not carry us so far as to prevent us from protecting those people who wish to get rid of destructive animals. Then we have the third section of people who realise how much destruction has been brought about by the depredation of dogs. I am not referring only to dingoes, but to the tame dog who has been allowed to run at large and embark upon the work of destruction during the night. These are the particular people who favour this Bill. Dogs must be kept properly under control. Even a dangerous dog can be prevented from doing any harm if it is controlled. Many people have desired to destroy dogs that have either killed or wounded their stock. I know of one case in which a valuable dog was de-

stroyed at night time. Had it been kept on the chain, it might have been alive to-day.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Would it not be better to muzzle dogs?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: They must be kept properly under control. Unfortunately these dogs not only kill some sheep but injure others. Sometimes it becomes necessary to put an end to one's sheep because of the manner in which they have been mutilated. Under the Act as it is, people may be heavily penalised if, in the attempt to safeguard their stock, they venture to kill some marauding dog. People sometimes lay poison or set traps in order to catch dogs. Under the Act such a person may be heavily fined. The dog may not die on the property where the poison is laid, but may get back to where it belongs before dying. The person who lays the poison or sets the trap may be liable for heavy damages. The owner of the dog may sue him and recover damages from him. That is not right. Another person may shoot a dog which is damaging his stock, and he, too, may be sued by the owner. Whilst there are some people who are opposed to the Bill, those who are in the best position to judge as to its value are in favour of it. The Vermin Board has been doing excellent work and tackling a very big task. This particular question the board has taken up seriously. In its report to the Director of Agriculture, dated 30 June last, it states—

It is considered in the interests of the Vermin Act that the Dog Act should be amended giving the local boards better control of domestic dogs. In the more settled districts the pure-bred dingo, or wild dog, is not such a menace to sheepowners as the uncontrolled domestic dog. These cause serious depredations near the various townsites, which would be minimised if greater powers were given to the local boards.

The Bill exempts municipalities. That is a dangerous thing. The primary producers' conference carried the following motion:—

That Conference uses its best endeavours to secure an amendment to the Dog Act, making it an offence and providing for a penalty in the event of domestic dogs being left unchained during the hours between sunset and sunrise.

The Bill does not go to that extent. The road boards conference, which was held in August last, also passed the following motion:—

That the Act be amended so that the licensing authorities be given power to limit the number of dogs that may be kept by any one

person, and that the onus of proving the usefulness of such dogs be upon the owner: that the Act be so amended to insert a clause providing for the compulsory chaining of all dogs between the hours of sunset and sunrise.

We thus have the opinion of the Vermin Board and the two bodies, which represent the whole of the State, concerned in the Bill. The metropolitan area has been exempted. These are the bodies that have the best knowledge of the position. The Bill is not so drastic as was suggested by those bodies, but I think it meets the position. This question affects the agricultural districts more than it does the pastoral districts. It may be interesting for those members who represent pastoral provinces to know the relative position between the two industries. The results of the assessment under the Vermin Assessment Act during the past year were as follows: Farming, unimproved value, £18,145,010, rate assessable, £37,802: pastoral, unimproved value, £2,888,602, rate assessable £12,035. The pastoral section is, therefore, paying only one-third of the amount the agricultural section is paying, but is receiving a greater benefit. That is a very unfair burden on the agricultural industry. Why should the agricultural areas pay two-thirds of the amount under the Vermin Act, while the pastoral areas receive most of the benefit? I have here an analysis of the expenditure for the year ended the 30th June last. This shows how unjust the tax is on the payment for vermin destroyed. In the farming areas the number of dogs destroyed was 4,125, and in the pastoral areas 11,325. In the case of foxes, the figures were 1,235 and 168 respectively. In the farming areas 776 eagles were destroyed and in the pastoral areas 2,631.

Hon. W. G. Miles: They are keeping the farming areas clean.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The amount paid out for that year on vermin destroyed was: Farming areas £10,914, and pastoral areas £23,644. Whilst the pastoral section pays only one-third of that amount received in tax, it benefits by the fact that it has more than twice the amount paid out on vermin destroyed.

Hon. V. Hamersley: We are keeping them.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: This Bill does not so much affect the pastoral districts, but they are benefiting considerably through the work done in the agricultural districts.

far more so than they should. Those who know the conditions should assist in getting the Bill through. We are asking merely for what is just and what is good for the whole State. The Bill will assist in protecting the flocks of the State. Flock owners should have power to destroy animals that attack their sheep without making themselves liable for damages. The depredations of dogs constitute a great hardship to stock owners, as well as pain and suffering to the sheep. Sheep are often so much mauled about that the owners have to kill them. Dogs that are capable of that sort of thing should be destroyed, and the man who destroys them should be protected by law. Clause 2 of the Bill amends Section 5 of the Act by the insertion after the word "time" of the words "in depots licensed for the purpose pursuant to regulations made under this Act." This refers to the control of dogs held by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. At present the society has power to take those dogs and keep them until they can be disposed of. It would be wrong to allow the inspectors of the society to take over dogs of the kind I have referred to. It will merely mean giving protection to those dogs and allowing them to be distributed elsewhere. The amendment will mean that all these depots will have to be licensed, which would be a very good thing. Clause 3 will embody a new provision in the Act. It gives local governing bodies power, if necessary, to refuse to register any dog. The local authority may hold the opinion that the dog is a destructive one, and may elect to refuse its registration. This seems drastic, but there is another provision whereby the owner may protect himself. If he thinks the dog is not destructive, he can approach the court, which will determine the point. If the dog is proved to be not destructive, the local authority must register it, otherwise it will have to be destroyed. Clause 4 embodies another new provision and a very important one. It gives the land owner power to lay poison. This is rather vaguely expressed in the Act. A man who lays poison to-day may be liable for damages. It is difficult enough to catch a dog by laying poison, especially those that are destructive, and therefore very cunning. I commend this particular clause to the House.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Clause 6 embodies a minor alteration and substitutes July for January. The clause will affect the date for the registration of dogs. Clause 7 embodies a proposed new section that will provide power to enable local authorities to make by-laws that will require dogs to be kept chained or otherwise under effective control from sunset to sunrise, and will authorise the destruction of any dog not so kept under control and found wandering at large. All agriculturists are in favour of some such provision, and they have indicated their desire in that respect at conference after conference. This is a very strong point with the farming community. It has been found that it is during the night time that trouble occurs. If dogs are allowed to wander about at night, they generally collect in bands of three or four or more, and then the destruction of sheep takes place. Dogs that are allowed to stray about at will at night are those that are led astray. Clause 8 deals with the application of various sections of the Act, and the clause as it appears in the Bill exempts the metropolitan area and municipalities outside that area unless the provisions of this legislation are extended to municipalities by an Order in Council published in the "Government Gazette." That clause was amended in the Legislative Assembly to exempt the metropolitan area and municipalities. Great care was taken in drafting the Bill, and the whole subject was viewed from various angles so as to rectify the position as it obtains to-day. It may be quite all right to exempt the metropolitan area from the provisions of the Bill, but I think it is altogether wrong to exclude municipalities. There are about 15 municipalities in the country districts, and it is from the towns that a great deal of the trouble in connection with dogs arises. A Bill of this description is absolutely essential to control the position.

Hon. Sir William Lathlain: If Clause 8 is agreed to, it will be necessary to proclaim each municipality as occasion arises.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Yes, if the Bill be agreed to as it stands now. That would hardly be a reasonable proposition. I hope that an amendment that will be placed upon the Notice Paper will be agreed to by members. Another amendment that will be

placed on the Notice Paper will affect Clause 7, which refers to the power to make by-laws. In the Bill, as it was introduced in the Lower House, the clause also contained provision that would enable a local authority to make by-laws to limit the number of dogs to be kept by any person. That portion of the clause was deleted, and I hope that an amendment that will be moved in this Chamber will have the effect of restoring that provision to the Bill. Many people retain dogs from sentimental reasons, although in many instances it would be doing such people a service if we limited the number of dogs they were permitted to keep. At present we are spending approximately £35,000 under the provisions of the Vermin Act, and good results are being obtained in keeping down the dingoes. That Act, however, does not apply to tame dogs, nor was it intended to so apply. Hence it is necessary to have legislation that will protect people who desire to safeguard their stock. The Dog Act of 1903 should be so amended that a landowner may be permitted to destroy dogs either by shooting or by laying poison, and in the event of the dog wandering off his property and dying elsewhere, the landowner should not be penalised as he must be under the provisions of the existing Act. The landowner should have that right because he merely acts to protect his property. I commend the Bill to hon. members, and I hope that when it is returned with certain amendments to another place, the members there will accept the measure in its amended form. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. E. ROSE (South-West) [7.37]: A Bill to amend the Dog Act has been needed for many years past. In common with others, I have suffered from the depredations of tame dogs that have been allowed to run at large. In the past we have not been allowed to lay poison in our paddocks except between sunset and sunrise. We were not permitted to allow the poison to remain there in day time. Under the law as it stands, we would be responsible for any loss sustained by an owner of a dog should poison be picked up by the animal on a property during the daytime. I congratulate the hon. member who introduced the Bill. It will be of great assistance to the sheep breeders throughout the State. There are many dogs running loose that are

indeed a curse and are of no value to anyone. Although many people own dogs for sentimental reasons, those dogs are actually a menace to others. It is often difficult for local governing authorities or for the police to ascertain who are the real owners. Of course some are licensed, and it becomes necessary therefore to pass the Bill to give power to the owners of land to lay baits on their property. At the present time it is difficult enough to destroy dogs that are responsible for losses among our flocks. In many parts of the agricultural districts the sheep breeders suffer more from the depredations of tame dogs, than they do from dingoes. I agree with the proposal to omit the metropolitan area and municipalities from the provisions of the Bill because I do not think it would be right to allow persons to lay poison about the city or in towns.

HON. A. LOVEKIN (Metropolitan) [7.40]: There is one defect in the Bill, which I shall point out to Mr. Baxter in the hope that he may see his way clear to provide an amendment when we deal with the measure in Committee. Recently there has been imported into this State a number of Alsatian wolf hounds. They are savage dogs and from what I have seen of them, I do not think they are a type of animal that should be tolerated for one moment. Should these dogs get loose and make for the bush, they may breed with the dingoes, and then we shall have a worse menace to the flocks and herds than we have at present in the dingo itself. I think we should include a clause in the Bill to provide that if any dog has once worried or bitten any person or stock, it shall be compulsorily destroyed. Section 23 of the principal Act reads—

If any dog rushes at, attacks, worries, or chases any person, or any horse, cattle, sheep, poultry, or any domestic animal, other than those trespassing, the owner of such dog shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding £5.

That is no good. Once a dog has shown a propensity to attack a person or an animal, it should be compulsorily destroyed. I hope Mr. Baxter will make some provision in that direction.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Is there not a section in the Dog Act that enables a dog that wanders about at large to be destroyed?

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I see nothing in the Bill that will enable a dog that has once attacked a person or an animal, to be destroyed. I hope Mr. Baxter will look into that point.

HON. W. J. MANN: (South-West) [7.43]: I would not like the Bill to pass the second reading stage without taking this opportunity to congratulate the hon. member upon the introduction of the Bill. Those of us who are resident in the country know only too well the losses that have been sustained as the result of dogs wandering at large. There is a good deal of false sentiment about the keeping of animals that is not based upon sound reasoning. Because a dog is playing about his block, the owner has no real thought for the property of other people. I know quite a number of instances in which small farmers, who have strained their resources to purchase a flock of sheep, have made a start in that direction only to find that some mongrel has got loose at night and destroyed the best part of their flocks. In any other walk of life, no such thing would be tolerated for one moment. There seems to be an idea entertained by many people that because a dog is a faithful animal, no action should be taken against the breed. I have a distinct recollection regarding the attitude taken up by a man whom I know. He owned a dog and was prepared to take his oath on a heap of Bibles as high as a church steeple, that his dog was the most docile and inoffensive animal that had ever lived. He quarrelled with a number of people who declared that the dog had been responsible for killing sheep. He said to all, "I see it every night on the doorstep before I retire to bed and the old chap is still there next morning." When I was motoring from Yallingup at 2 o'clock one morning and while I was still about 17 miles from home I came across that dog. When I told the owner he asked me what I had been drinking. It was not long afterwards that the dog stopped a bullet in a paddock not very far from where I saw him. That was the only evidence that convinced the owner that his dog had been responsible for a lot of trouble. That is only one instance; there are others in the South-West that I know of. Around Nan-nup hundreds of sheep have been destroyed by wandering dogs in the last few years. Some of these dogs have been known to

travel as far as 35 miles in a night to places where sheep were paddocked. I intend to support the second reading of the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—CITY OF PERTH SUPER-ANNUATION FUND.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 11th October.

HON. E. H. HARRIS (North-East) [7.48]: I am not as enthusiastic about supporting this Bill as other members who have already spoken, for the reason that it does not indicate on what principle the fund is to be established. The member who introduced the Bill in another place indicated that the scheme would be framed somewhat on the lines of that of the Commonwealth. The remarks of Mr. Lovekin support that view, but so far as I can recollect no mention of that was made by Mr. Franklin who introduced the Bill in this Chamber. He did say that the Bill would provide for the City Council to establish a scheme by means of regulations. We have heard from time to time in this Chamber serious complaints about the Government endeavouring to do so many things by regulation. I, amongst others, have voiced complaints. On this occasion my complaint is that instead of the Government bringing forward an amendment of the Municipal Corporations Act to provide that any corporation in Western Australia should be entitled to establish such a fund by way of regulation, it has been left to a private member to do so and to make the proposal apply only to the Perth Municipal Council. Throughout the State we find that most of the municipalities make some recompense to those who have rendered them good service and who are on the point of retirement.

Hon. A. Lovekin: They are mostly too small to embark upon a scheme such as this.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: The Municipal Corporations Act could be amended to provide for employees of municipal councils throughout the State to subscribe to a superannuation scheme. The Bill before us deals with Perth only. I desire to know definitely on what lines it is proposed that the

scheme shall operate. We are practically giving the municipal council a blank cheque and the ratepayers will be responsible. I submit that the ratepayers are entitled to know what it is proposed to pay the employees. If the Bill is passed I presume that all the employees will not come within the scope of the proposed regulation. Reference has been made to the Commonwealth superannuation scheme which contains this line, "Every employee shall subscribe to the fund irrespective of his age." The Bill before us, by Clause 2, provides for "superannuation benefits for employees of the City Council or any of them or any class or classes of them" It is obvious that it is not contemplated that all employees of the City Council shall come within the scope of the Bill. What prompts the Council to put up that proposal and then to suggest that it is proposed to follow the lines of the Federal scheme? In the Federal scheme every person must subscribe and there are no fewer than 82 clauses in it. There we have a definite scheme set out to meet almost every circumstance that may arise. We are entitled to know what scheme it is proposed to adopt in Perth. We should not be asked to pass merely an enabling Bill, something that will permit the Municipal council to put up a scheme by regulation. Mr. Fraser has pointed out to us that the Federal proposal does not act favourably towards single men, that the dependants of single men are not able to collect superannuation. Is it proposed by the City Council to follow on these lines, or will the dependants of single men be treated differently?

Hon. J. T. Franklin: For the information of the hon. member I may inform him that there will be no objection to dependants of single men being included.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: The point I wish to make is that there is no reference to this, and other similar anomalies may creep in. It may be said we shall have an opportunity to voice our objections to the regulations when they are laid on the Table of the House. It is highly desirable, however, that we should know beforehand something definite about the proposals. I am surprised to find that of the many stalwarts of the Labour movement—no fewer than 27 of them in another place—only one of them raised a query as to whether the Bill was likely to be equitable for the Council em-

ployees. If we take the scale of rates that are provided for by the Commonwealth we find that an employee on the basic wage has to subscribe no less than 3s. 6½d. a week to entitle him to half the wage he is receiving. I submit that on the basic wage here not one of the employees of the City Council is capable of paying 3s. 6½d. per week towards a superannuation fund. Apparently it is not contemplated that all shall subscribe to the fund, because Clause 2 of the Bill indicates that it may be drafted to suit certain of the employees. I am entitled to ask whether the Bill has been drafted solely for the benefit of those in receipt of the higher rate of salary. Looking up the information supplied by Mr. Franklin for Mr. Lovekin I find that the age of the youngest employee of the council is 16 years and the age of the eldest 66 years, whilst the average is 37 years, and the number of employees is 170. Salaries range from the lowest at £39 to the highest at £1,200. The Commonwealth scheme provides that so much per unit shall be paid, and the minimum payment shall be for two units. Under that scheme, to secure a definite sum certain subscriptions must be made. It was suggested in another place that the City Council would not engage anyone who was over 45 years of age, and that retirement would come about at the age of 65. At the present time, however, there are some employees of the City Council who have already arrived at the age of 64, 65 and 66 years. We are entitled to know what provision is going to be made for those men. Will they fall back on Section 155 of the Municipal Corporations Act? If so, the ratepayers will subscribe on the one basis for one section of the employees, and on an entirely different basis for the others.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Do you suggest that the whole scheme should be set out in the Bill?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Everything should be set out as is provided in the Federal Act. In this way it could be passed by this House and the ratepayers. Members would then know exactly what liability was to be incurred and which of the employees were going to subscribe, and what they were going to receive.

Hon. J. Nicholson: They would have the opportunity of seeing it in the form of a regulation.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: If we passed the measure to-morrow, and the City Council decided to put it into operation in a few weeks' time and then laid the regulations on the Table of the House, Parliament would have adjourned meanwhile. There are only two or three measures to be dealt with, and the Government are merely waiting for the passing of the Estimates. Suppose the regulations were laid on the Table two weeks after the meeting of Parliament in July next, with the scheme already in operation; what would be the position then? It might be considered wise to adopt the provision in the Federal scheme that if an officer decides to retire he shall pay in advance the equivalent sum of money. Some employees might pay in perhaps £375 and thereafter draw £400, or £500, or £600 annually as long as they lived. Were I an employee of the Perth City Council and that set of circumstances arose, I would immediately pay in the necessary amount and retire. The disallowance of the regulation might then be moved and carried, and what would be the position of the Perth City Council relatively to an employee who had retired in accordance with the terms of the regulation?

Hon. A. Lovekin: But under the Federal Act one cannot pay a lump sum and then draw a pension.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: The hon. member may be putting a different interpretation on the Federal provision. The Federal Act contains 82 sections and a couple of schedules, and to analyse all those provisions in connection with the information which has been supplied to us is not the work of a mere half-hour. My interpretation may not be the right one, but it represents my view of the circumstances. The scale provided by the Commonwealth is such as some of the council employees could not stand up to at their present rates of wages, while others, on the higher scale, would find it highly beneficial to pay under a scheme of that kind and retire before or after attaining the age of 65 years. The worker on the basic wage of £220 per annum would have to pay 3s. 6½d. per week out of his wages in order to ensure to himself a pension equal to £2 2s. per week.

Hon. A. Lovekin: He would have to pay more than that for a pension of £2 per week. It takes four units to make £104.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: He would pay 7s. 1d. for the first £52 and 6s. 6d.

for each subsequent £52. The worker on the basic wage would not derive as much benefit from the scheme as would employees on higher rates. By interjection I asked Mr. Franklin what he meant by "desertion," because the measure provides certain things in the event of an employee deserting his wife. Questions might crop up later as to the meaning of the word. Having regard to what has happened in the law courts, the lack of a definition of "desertion" as used in the Bill might lead to legal complications.

Hon. A. Lovekin: The Federal Act contains a section to the same effect.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: We are only assuming that the Federal Act will be followed. The Bill also provides superannuation benefits for employees. Now, the Federal Act provides a scheme for "officers." But every person employed by the Federal Government is an "officer." On the other hand, there is no definition of "officer" in the Municipal Corporations Act. Are we to assume that all the employees of the Perth City Council are "officers" or does that body employ both "officers" and "employees"?

Hon. A. Lovekin: That would be laid down in the regulations.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: But the whole scheme should be contained in the measure before us, and not in regulations. Then, whilst Parliament is sitting, members would have an opportunity of investigating the Bill and knowing exactly what they were passing. Otherwise the measure might be passed and come into operation with the result that eventually Parliament might have to review a position under which some employees received such benefits as would cause friction or even lead to legal proceedings. I hope Mr. Franklin will be able to give us further information. I shall be pleased to vote for the second reading if the hon. member will put an itemised bill on the table instead of asking us to sign a blank cheque as to which details will be furnished afterwards. I am in favour of superannuation schemes, believing that system to be infinitely better for the Perth City Council and its employees. Then there would be a definite scheme under which employees would be entitled to certain things. This is far preferable to such matters being dealt with at the will of the council, a will which might not be fully expressed owing to the absence of councillors, with the result that employees of lengthened

service might be treated with injustice. I shall be guided in voting on the second reading by the information which Mr. Franklin may give in replying to the debate.

On motion by Hon. J. Nicholson, debate adjourned.

BILL—GROUP SETTLEMENT ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [8.10] in moving the second reading said: The object of this Bill is to provide means for effecting a revaluation of group properties in order to give the occupiers an opportunity of making good. Many group holdings are now advanced to a stage where, it is considered, a fair number of stock can be carried. To enable settlers to know their position, and to commence collection of interest—which to date has been capitalised—it is necessary to fix the capital debt in respect of improvements on such holdings, exclusive of plant and stock which are supplied to settlers under the Group Settlers' Advances Act on eight years' terms. The Group Settlement Act, by Subsection 2 of Section 3, provides—

The amount of such expenditure on the area chargeable to the group settlers and the part thereof to be apportioned to each parcel of land intended to be granted shall be assessed and determined by the managing trustee of the Agricultural Bank.

The Government, after giving the matter a considerable amount of thought, came to the conclusion that Mr. McLarty is too fully occupied with other important duties to carry out a work which will undoubtedly involve a considerable time, and necessitate a close consideration of expenditure, value of improvements, and revenue derivable from the farms. Cabinet has decided that Mr. McLarty shall be relieved of this work and that a special board shall be appointed to determine the capitalisation. It is generally accepted that the holdings will not carry satisfactorily the total expenditure on them, owing to various reasons, for example full clearing and inexperienced labour in the early stages, experimental methods, and crop failures in early stages. All these factors must be considered by the proposed board, who must also acquire an intimate

knowledge of each district in which a group is situated. The proposed board will comprise three members, one of whom must be an officer of the Agricultural Bank. The Group Settlement Act provides for the mortgaging of holdings to that institution, although, as will be readily understood, the capital debt fixed will not be a charge against its funds; but any further advances for development or stock must be made by the trustees from bank funds, such advances ranking equally with the original mortgage debt. It is, therefore, plainly advisable that the bank shall be represented on the board. It has been suggested that the Group Settlement Board should carry out the work of assessment, but the Government, after careful consideration, think it preferable to entrust the work to a separate board. It is of course possible that a member of the present Group Settlement Board will be appointed, but the idea of the Government is that that board being an administrative board, its members should not be brought into the question of capitalisation under this Bill. It has also been suggested that an officer of the bank should alone make the valuations. But the work demands local knowledge as well as consideration of financial aspects, and it is thought that the combination of requirements in one officer would be difficult to obtain. In another place, doubt has been expressed whether the principal Act confers power to fix the capital debt at less than the expenditure. Section 3, Subsection (1), is intended to confer this power, but to make assurance doubly sure, the Government propose to add to the Bill in Committee the words "with power to the Board to write off as much of the expenditure as it may think fit." That will give absolute power to the board, apart altogether from the Government, to decide the capitalisation in every instance. I will give members a few instances showing the expenditure upon a number of holdings, the average per holding, the acreage cleared, the pastures sown, and the quantity of stock carried. The figures I give will have particular reference to the locations on the Peel Estate, Busselton, Manjimup and Denmark. Northcliffe has been omitted, as it is not sufficiently advanced to afford a proper comparison. The group expenditure shown includes interest, but no land purchased or drainage charges as they affect the Peel Estate and the Bus-

selton groups. These will be additional, but have not yet been fixed. The expenditure figures are on retained holdings only as at the 30th April of this year. On Group 29 on the Peel Estate there are ten holdings. The average expenditure per holding amounts to £3,411, the average per holding for stock and advances for plants is £277, the total average expenditure on these ten holdings being £3,688. The average area cleared per holding amounts to 130 acres, and the average acreage sown amounts to 118 acres. In some cases the pastures have had to be sown over and over again. All these holdings are equipped with houses and dairy buildings. The stock carried averages 14 cows per holding. On Group 30 there are 15 holdings. The average expenditure per holding, including stock and equipment, is £2,899. The average acreage cleared is 97 acres, the average acreage sown is 91 acres, and the average number of cows per holding is 13. On Group 33 there are 13 holdings. The average expenditure, including stock and equipment, is £3,459. The average area cleared is 102 acres, and the average acreage sown is 78 acres. The average number of cows per holding is 10. On Group 54 there are 17 holdings. The average expenditure, including stock and equipment, amounts to £2,654. The area cleared averages 73 acres per holding, the acreage sown amounts to 67 acres per holding, and the average number of cows carried is seven per holding. These are groups least affected by the reconstruction. At Busselton there are several groups not affected at all by the reconstruction, such as No. 4 and No. 6. On No. 3 there are 20 holdings retained. The average expenditure, including stock and equipment, is £3,016. The average acreage cleared amounts to 52 acres, the average acreage sown is 40 acres, and the average number of cows carried is five. On group No. 4 there are 16 holdings. The average expenditure, including stock and equipment, is £3,192. The average acreage cleared is 74 acres, the average acreage sown is 59 acres, and the average number of cows carried is seven per holding. This group is not affected by the reconstruction because no alteration has been made there. On Group No. 6 there are 22 holdings. The average expenditure, including stock and equipment, is £3,211. The average acreage cleared is 50 acres, the average acreage

sown is 42 acres, and the number of cows carried averages four per holding. On Group 12 there are 20 holdings retained. The average expenditure, including stock and equipment, is £2,671. The average acreage cleared is 47 acres, the average acreage sown is 50 acres, and the cows average three per holding. I have here a complete list of these examples, but the average is very much the same throughout, and I do not wish to weary members by reading the whole of the list.

Hon. A. Lovekin: But will they appear in "Hansard"?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: They are in "Hansard" now, in the report of the proceedings in another place. I have compared this list with what is already published in "Hansard," so I know they are the same. A study of these figures will impress members with a sense of the necessity for fixing a fair capitalisation. They will also recognise that some body should be appointed to carry out the task, and that that body should be composed of men qualified for the work, and men in whom all parties concerned will have confidence. A fair deal to the settlers and a fair deal to the State should be the objective. I trust the Bill will be passed without any undue delay, in order that the work of capitalisation may be gone on with. The Government are very anxious to proceed with the work, so that the settlers may know where they are, and everyone concerned will be acquainted with the situation. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. Lovekin, debate adjourned.

BILL—PERMANENT RESERVE (KING'S PARK).

Order discharged.

Order of the Day read for the third reading of the Bill.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I move—

That this Order of the Day be discharged from the Notice Paper.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 8.25 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 16th October, 1928.

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

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received from the Auditor-General, in pursuance of Section 53 of the Audit Act, 1904, the 38th Report, for the financial year ended the 30th June, 1928, which I now lay on the Table of the House.

QUESTION—STATE SHIP "KOOLINDA."

Mr. COVERLEY asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Is it a fact that the motor vessel "Koolinda" on the last trip South again ran twenty-four hours ahead of scheduled time to Shark Bay? 2, If so, will he insist that in future the vessel is kept to schedule?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1 and 2, The vessel was scheduled to leave Shark Bay on the 7th October, and left on that date.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Health Act Amendment.
- 2, Hospital Fund.

BILL—WHEAT BAGS.

Third Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE
(Hon. H. Millington—Leederville) [4.40]:
I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.