

Act provides for only single votes, not a plurality of votes, at a referendum. If such an inconsistency exists I am quite prepared to assist the Honorary Minister so to amend the Act that provision may be made to apply plural voting to a referendum. That would render the Act consistent, and would meet any objection the Honorary Minister has to offer. The attitude of the Government, or of some Ministers of the Government, in having declared that until this measure is passed the Government will not introduce any other amendment to the Municipal Corporations Act, makes it clear that the Bill is not a true reflex of the opinion of the people, and so I must vote against it.

On motion by Hon. E. H. Gray, debate adjourned.

#### **BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).**

##### *Assembly's Message.*

Message received from the Assembly notifying that it had agreed to amendments Nos. 1, 2 and 4 made by the Council, and agreed to amendment No. 3 subject to a further amendment in which the Assembly desired the concurrence of the Council.

*House adjourned at 6.10 p.m.*

## **Legislative Assembly,**

*Thursday, 7th September, 1933.*

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

#### **QUESTION—BULK HANDLING.**

Mr. SLEEMAN asked the Minister for Railways: Does he intend to table all the papers relating to the bulk handling of wheat in the Fremantle zone, and all papers dealing with the arrangements and proposals to date between the Government, Railway Department, Harbour Trust, Co-operative Wheat Pool and wheat firms for the bulk handling of wheat in the State?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: As many of the matters involved in these papers are the subject of correspondence and are still under consideration by the Government, it would be inadvisable for them to be made available at this stage.

#### **BILLS (4)—FIRST READING.**

##### **1, Lotteries (Control) Act Amendment.**

Introduced by the Minister for Police,

##### **2, Fruit Cases Act Amendment.**

##### **3, Plant Diseases Act Amendment.**

##### **4, Feeding Stuffs Act Amendment.**

Introduced by the Minister for Agriculture.

#### **BILL—MORTGAGEES' RIGHTS RESTRICTION ACT CONTINUANCE.**

##### *Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS** (Hon. M. F. Troy—Mt. Magnet) [4.35] in moving the second reading said: This Act has

been in force since the 19th August, 1931, and to date 462 applications have been made to the court, with the following results:—

Applications granted .. .. .	267
Applications refused .. .. .	15
Temporary orders (e.g., to enter into possession and receive rents and profits) .. .. .	25
Applications adjourned <i>sine die</i> ..	133
Applications pending .. .. .	22

The applications under the Act only partially indicate its value. There is no doubt that had it not been in force, the position of a large number of mortgagors would have been rendered impossible. Conditions to-day, save for the welcome rise in the price of wool, show practically no signs of improvement, and it is essential to the welfare of the State that the interests of mortgagors be protected until such time as trade conditions improve. Many people are in a difficult position through no fault of their own. Many are in difficulties because the stagnation of trade and industry has brought them down, and it is essential that the Act be renewed for a further term. There has not been much agitation, but a desire has been expressed that the Act be extended for three years. I do not think there ought to be any great objection to that, but on this occasion we might extend it for one year. Next year we shall be in a better position to estimate the outlook. This is the third or fourth year of the depression, but with the increase in the value of wool, conditions may show some improvement next year. If not, we may have to re-enact the measure for a longer term. I think we might well extend the Act for one year and when that period expires, the future can be judged by the conditions then obtaining. This session the House contains a number of new members, some of whom are not aware of the provisions of the Act. Let me briefly explain some of the provisions of the Act, and its intention. For the purposes of the Act, which this Bill seeks to continue till the end of December, 1934, "mortgage" includes not only what is generally understood by the word, but also any agreement for the sale of land which has not been completed by transfer and under which the purchase money is payable by instalments. Such an agreement is to be deemed equivalent to a mortgage to secure payment of the purchase money and interest. Similarly, the Act extends to leases of land containing optional or compulsory purchasing

clauses, the rent being treated as interest and the agreed purchase money as principal secured by a mortgage. It applies to all mortgages current on the date of the commencement of the Act—19th August, 1931—and to any mortgage thereafter executed as security for any money that was secured by any mortgage current on that date. Contracting out is strictly prohibited. A mortgagee is forbidden, except with the leave of the Supreme Court, to call up the mortgage money or take any steps, by sale, entry into possession, foreclosure or otherwise, to enforce his security. In the case of an agreement for sale, if the vendor, without the leave of the court, has taken any steps to forfeit the rights of the purchaser, he may be ordered to reinstate the purchaser in the enjoyment of such rights. A mortgagee, however, is empowered to enter into possession of an abandoned property. In dealing with applications for leave, the court is required to consider the mortgagor's chances of redeeming the property, his conduct in the matter, and the extent to which his default has been caused or contributed to by economic or financial conditions affecting trade or industry in the State. The court has further to consider any hardship that may be suffered on one side or the other, and is not to grant the leave applied for unless satisfied that it would be unjust and inequitable not to grant it. Leave, if granted, may be made subject to any terms that the court may see fit to impose. In case a mortgagee seeks to recover interest by action, the court may give judgment for payment at a future date, or for payment by instalments. Notwithstanding the foregoing provisions, a vendor may—unless the Supreme Court otherwise directs—exercise his rights under the contract of sale if the purchaser is 12 months in arrear in payment of principal or interest and has, during any period of six months, made no payment on account of the amount due under the agreement, but he must first give the purchaser one month's notice to pay. No judgment creditor is allowed, except by leave of the Supreme Court, to issue any process of execution against land for the recovery of a sum of £50 or upwards. In dealing with applications for leave, the court is to be guided by much the same conditions as apply in the case of applications by mortgagees. Process of execution, however, may be registered against land but is not to be enforced without leave. Relief against the

immediate enforcement of a judgment may be granted to a mortgagee if the immediate enforcement would inflict great hardship on him by reason of the effect of the Act on his property or investments, or the realisation thereof. Those are the chief provisions of the Act, which it is desired to continue. There have been no complaints about the operation of the measure. The number of cases of foreclosure might have been greater but for the fact that this legislation existed. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**MR. LATHAM** (York) [4.41]: I do not intend to raise any objection to the Bill; as a matter of fact it is a very necessary measure. There are men engaged in farming and other primary pursuits who are of opinion that the Act should remain on the statute-book for a definite period of five years. I think that the present Premier, when Leader of the Opposition last year, voiced that opinion. The farmers, however, can be well served if a Bill is introduced annually to continue the Act. Then, if there are any complaints, members are afforded an opportunity to ventilate them. If the measure were continued for three or four years, the only way in which complaints could be voiced would be by moving a substantive motion, which would be a very cumbersome method. By requiring the Act to be continued from year to year, members are given an opportunity to express their views on it. This measure has proved a useful piece of legislation. It was one of the first of its kind introduced in Australasia, perhaps in the world. Evidently it was well framed. I remember the member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan) assisting in the drafting of the Bill. So useful has the Act proved that it has been copied in other States and in New Zealand. Some farmers believe that because they are clients of the Agricultural Bank they are not protected by the Act. However, one cannot imagine a Government introducing a law which would place greater hardships on their clients, through the Agricultural Bank or otherwise, than on other people. Farmers can be perfectly assured that the Government are not likely to do to them what the Act prevents being done to other people. So far, I believe, there has not been a case of hardship. The value of this legislation rests not in the result of applications to

the court, but in its effect as a deterrent from the infliction of hardship on persons who happen to be buying land on terms or to be mortgagors. For my part, I am prepared to see the Bill go through all its stages to-day.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee, etc.*

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

## BILL—REDUCTION OF RENTS ACT CONTINUANCE.

*Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE** (Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [4.51]: in moving the second reading said: This, like the last Bill, has for its object the continuance of emergency legislation brought into existence at the time of the Premiers' Plan, and forming part of that plan. The Reduction of Rents Act provided that rents of leases of the duration of one month or more should be reduced by 22½ per cent. Most members who sat in the previous Parliament are conversant with the legislation then introduced. This was part of it, and was enacted during a period of emergency. By the incidence of other legislation, some of it Commonwealth, some of it State, the returns from various forms of investment were reduced considerably. The rule was that the returns should be reduced by about 22½ per cent. Hon. members will recollect that the Commonwealth converted practically the whole of the Commonwealth debt held in Australia from rates over 4 per cent. to Commonwealth inscribed stock bearing interest at 4 per cent. and having currencies of 12 years, 15 years, 18 years and up to 27 years. All holders of bonds or inscribed stock at the time had their incomes reduced by 22½ per cent. The rates of interest under mortgages were similarly reduced. Workers generally suffered reductions in wages, through financial emergency legislation and in other ways. It was felt that owners of leased property should make sacrifices similar to those made by people in other walks of life as the result of legislation reducing income. The Bill when ori-

ginally introduced dealt only with existing leases, irrespective of the period they had to run. Members now on this side of the House, who were then in Opposition, prevailed on the Attorney General of the day to deal with mortgages existing at the time, so that even if a lease expired, as some of them did, within seven or eight weeks, or three months, or 12 months, the lessor should not during the continuance of this legislation be allowed to charge more than the current rent statutorily reduced by 22½ per cent. A man might have a lease for three years, of which two years had run before the enactment of the measure. He would benefit from the reduction for one year. It was, however, provided that irrespective of the term of the lease there could be no increase in the payment under the lease while this legislation existed. Such a provision is in the Act, and will continue to operate if this continuance Bill passes. The Act reduced rents under leases not determinable by less than a month's notice, at the rate of 4s. 6d. in the pound; but it applies only to leases existing on the 19th August, 1931, or the renewals of such leases. It does not apply to leases granted after the 19th August, 1931, unless the premises were subject to a lease in operation at that date. By last session's continuance Act the operation of the 1931 Act was continued until the 31st December, 1933. If this Bill passes, the Act will remain in force until the 31st December, 1934. As regards leases made subsequent to the 19th August, 1931, it was felt that the people who made the leases were quite aware of all existing circumstances, and that if they chose to take a lease of property on terms then existing they did it with their eyes open, and therefore there was no reason to bring an Act of this kind into operation with regard to future leases. Large numbers of premises in Perth and throughout the State are held under lease, as well as farms and other properties; probably 10,000 leases could be cited as coming under the operation of the Act. Those who have obtained relief under the Act are not now in much better circumstances than they were at the time the legislation was passed. Therefore, in the absence of criticism of the Act, it is thought desirable to continue the protection it affords, for another 12 months. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Latham, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).**

### *Council's Amendments.*

Schedule of four amendments made by the Council now considered.

### *In Committee.*

Mr. Sleeman in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Clause 4.—In line 21, delete the words "members of the board, or such of the":

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The object of this amendment is to save the Minister from being drawn into the question of which members of a board shall stand for re-election when the boundaries of a ward have been altered. The Bill provides that instead of all the members of a board seeking re-election in such circumstances, as is the existing practice, only those members whose wards are affected shall go out. Under the Bill the decision as to which members shall seek re-election rests with the Minister. The amendment makes the action automatic. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 2. Clause 4.—Delete the words "as the Minister may think fit and determine," in line 1 and insert in lieu thereof the words "representing the ward or wards affected."

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This amendment is consequential upon the one we have agreed to. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 3. New Clause.—Insert a new clause to stand as Clause 10, as follows:—

(10.) Section seventy of the principal Act, as amended by section twelve of the Act No. 35 of 1932, is amended by deleting from subsection (2) all the words after the words "such declaration shall be made," and inserting in lieu thereof the words "on the nomination day, but in the case of an annual election the person then

declared to be elected shall not take office until after the day appointed for the annual election."

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** This amendment deals with the point raised by the member for Swan when the Bill was before the Legislative Assembly. At that time he did not have his amendment on the Notice Paper, and I suggested that he should try his luck in another place. Evidently he adopted my advice. It provides that when a candidate is returned unopposed, he shall take office as from nomination day, but should he be returned unopposed at an annual election, he shall not take office until after the day appointed for the annual election. There is no objection to the amendment. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

**MR. SAMPSON:** In explanation of the absence of my amendment from the Notice Paper, the Minister will recollect that the Bill was taken into Committee without any opportunity being given for amendments to be placed on the Notice Paper. I would like the Minister to consider the advisability of inserting two words in the Council's amendment. I suggest that after "person" in line 7 of the proposed new clause, the words "or persons" be inserted.

**MR. LATHAM:** Under the Interpretation Act the word "person" includes persons as well.

**MR. SAMPSON:** I have looked up the Interpretation Act and I do not think that is so. I overlooked the fact that more than one person might be elected unopposed. Therefore, I think some provision should be made to meet that position. Can I move to amend the Council's amendment?

**THE CHAIRMAN:** It all depends on what you want to add.

**MR. SAMPSON:** Then I move—

That the Council's amendment be amended by inserting after "persons," in line 7, the words "or persons."

Amendment on the Council's amendment put and passed; the Council's amendment, as amended, agreed to.

**No. 4. New Clause.**—Insert a new clause to stand as Clause 14, as follows:—

(14.) Subsection (3) of section three hundred and twenty of the principal Act, as amended by section sixty-six of the Act No. 35 of 1932, is amended by inserting

the word "in" after the word "published," in the fourth and fifth lines of the said subsection.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** In this instance the Legislative Council has again justified its existence. It has discovered that the word "in" has been left out of the Act. No one detected the error until the Bill was introduced and was dealt with in the Council. Its absence has never done any damage. It is such occasions as this that disclose the Legislative Council as a House of review! There is no objection to the amendment. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

Resolutions reported, the report adopted, and a Message accordingly returned to the Council.

## **BILL—GOVERNMENT TRAMWAYS ACT AMENDMENT.**

Received from the Council and read a first time.

## **BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT.**

Returned from the Council without amendment.

## **BILL—TENANTS, PURCHASERS, AND MORTGAGORS' RELIEF ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT** (Hon. J. J. Kenneally—East Perth) [5.8] in moving the second reading said: The Bill will amend the principal Act, which has been on the statute-book for some considerable time, and has two objects in view. One is to alter Section 24 and the second is to extend the operations of the Act for another 12 months. The parent Act makes provision for the protection of people who, on account of unemployment, are unable to pay rent. On application to the Court, a protection order is granted, but that is done only after the Commissioner, who is a magistrate, has inquired into the circumstances of the applicant, who is the tenant, and of the owner of the property. If the Commissioner is satisfied that an order for protec-

tion of the tenant should be issued, he has authority to do so for any period up to three months, and subsequent applications for additional orders may be made, but in no instance can the period exceed three months. Section 24 of the Act, which the Bill will amend, deals with the position of people who entered into contracts prior to the commencement of the Act and brings them within the purview of the legislation, but also provides for those who enter into contracts after the commencement of the Act being able to contract themselves outside its provisions. While many people have been protected under the Act, to a very large extent that protection has been confined to those who took over houses before the commencement of the Act. The practice has been for agents or owners of property, before permitting persons to become tenants of houses, to insist upon the signing of a form contracting themselves outside the provisions of the Act. As a result, when poverty has overtaken such people, the Act accords them no protection whatever. The Act was originally introduced for the protection of people in that position and it was not anticipated that under Section 24, many persons would be excluded from its operations. No risk of injustice will arise in consequence of the amendment suggested in the Bill because as I have already pointed out, the Commissioner has to inquire into the circumstances of both tenant and owner and has to be satisfied that the protection order should be issued before he adopts that course. Should any injustice be likely in the event of an order being issued, the Commissioner is not to grant the order. Therefore, there can be no risk of injustice to the owners of properties. Unfortunately, owing to the position that has arisen under the operations of Section 24, many people have been evicted, although those persons, it was anticipated, would have received protection under the Act. It will be obvious that the longer the Act is in operation, the greater will be the number of people who will be affected in that direction. Section 24 reads as follows—

The parties to any contract made or entered into after the date of the commencement of this Act may exclude the operation thereof as between themselves; but this Act shall be operative and have effect, notwithstanding the terms of any contract made or entered into before such date.

It will be obvious therefore that the longer the section remains in that form, the greater will be the number of individuals excluded from the operations of the Act.

The Minister for Justice: Without the amendment we desire, it would be hardly worth while continuing the Act.

**THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT:** Without it, the Act would apply only to those who entered into contracts before the passing of the Act and to the comparatively few individuals that agents or owners have not insisted shall sign the form contracting themselves out of the legislation. I have appeared in court for different people under the provisions of the parent Act and the production of the signed document indicating that the tenants had contracted themselves outside the provisions of the Act, proved sufficient for the Commissioner—rightly so: I am not complaining of that—to say that he could not do anything for the applicants because they had contracted themselves outside the Act; and therefore that took it out of his jurisdiction. It is not his province, then, to inquire as to why the man signed that document. What I suggest is that many people, not foreseeing the future, in order to get the tenancy of a house would say, "Well, we have to get in, so we will sign ourselves outside the provision." Very often disaster overtakes that family. I recollect the discussion when the Act was introduced; the desire of the House as then constituted was that protection should be granted against the eviction of people simply because on account of unemployment they were unable to pay their rent. This was confined to the men who, as the result of unemployment, were unable to pay, and it should appeal to members that a man in that position ought to be protected. The House said that in passing the Act, and I think when we give protection to those men we should not nullify it by reason of anything in the Act granting the protection, as for instance the section which enables those in a position to do so to force a man to sign a document making the Act inoperative for himself. The Bill proposes to delete Section 24 of the Act. But obviously if we were merely to delete that section and put nothing in its place our action would not be giving protection to those who have already signed under the existing legislation. So Clause 2 of the Bill will take the place of Section 24, the clause making definite

provision for the protection of those who have already been forced to sign the agreement contracting themselves outside of the Act. Clause 2 reads as follows—

From and after the commencement of this section the provisions of this Act shall apply and have effect in all cases, notwithstanding any contract to the contrary heretofore or hereafter made or entered into.

Mr. Doney: The unfortunate thing is that the existing contracts were made in accordance with the law of that time.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: Yes, but when the law was first brought into force it was provided that, notwithstanding any contracts entered into before the coming of the Act into operation, the Act would apply. The amendment in the Bill is in effect simply saying the same thing. Protection is required for a large number of people who have come under the exclusive portion of the Act since it has been in operation, and as the years extend it will be found that almost every person who has changed his dwelling place has been called upon to sign the agreement before obtaining tenancy. It is necessary that we should furnish protection for all those unfortunate people. The Bill further provides for the extension of the operation of the Act for another year. I have already said that a protection order may run for three months after the expiration of the Act. Thus while the Act will cease at the end of December, a protection order may run until the following March. So while the provision for the extension of the operation of the Act provides that the Act shall operate until the end of next year, it is further provided that any protection order may operate until the end of the following March, but no longer. I hope the Bill will commend itself to the House. I have been in some of the homes affected by the operations of the Act, and whilst it may be said that the Act when first introduced gave considerable relief to a large number of people, unfortunately as time has gone on the Act has applied only to an increasingly restricted number of people. Members have now to consider whether they will extend the Act, amend it and say the time has arrived when we should make it embrace those we expected at the time of its passing it would cover, namely, those who through unemployment are unable to pay rent. Necessarily we must see to it that the Act applies to all people in that unfortunate position. The Commissioner, after hearing both sides, will

determine whether the interests of justice demand that a protection order should be granted. If he thinks it would not be fair to grant such order, he already has the power to refuse it. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Latham, debate adjourned.

## BILL—SOUTHERN CROSS SOUTHWARDS RAILWAY.

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from 5th September.

MR. MANN (Beverley) [5.24]: I do not intend to delay the House at any length. I am hopeful the Government will eventually, after the survey is completed, link the two lines together, that to Hyden Rock and that south of Southern Cross. It appears to me the building of the Southern Cross line alone will cost the farmers an enormous amount of money in freight, for the natural port or outlet for wheat grown in that area must be through the Bunbury or the Albany zone. So I am hopeful the Government will go farther and bring down another Bill for the construction of both lines and the linking of them together.

Mr. Marshall: Will you want some roads laid down alongside the two lines?

Mr. MANN: The farmers are always desirous of having good roads. If the two lines are built and linked up it will be very helpful to the farmers, but the building of the spur line alone will not be of any great advantage to them.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford-Midland) [5.25]: For a number of years I have been associated with proposals for the construction of agricultural railways somewhat similar to the suggested line, although in different areas. While I can appreciate the difficulty there is in getting a Government proposal of this kind defeated, because of the support generally given to the expenditure of public funds, nevertheless I propose to appeal to the House to realise that there must be a period when we shall have to call a halt in the construction of railways of this kind. Already we have had one railway Bill this session. I thought the Government were reckless in introducing that one, although it was claimed that

it was to serve a special area, and that there were special circumstances justifying the extension of the railway from Yuna into that specially favoured area. On the second reading of that Bill I pointed out that I thought wiser counsels should prevail in these matters, that we should realise the economic situation of the day and, without preaching up in the clouds about economic reform, we should get down to earth and apply practical remedies to the difficulties of the State as we find them to-day. But the Government have persevered with their policy of railway construction as represented in the Yuna-Dartmoor proposition. However, I was keenly disappointed when I found it was proposed to continue the old policy that has been going on for the last 25 years, the policy of borrowing money and building railways through partially-settled country, with a total disregard of the economic effect of it upon the financial stability of the State. The time has arrived when we should definitely declare that we are not going to extend settlement on areas remote from existing railways. Recently I noticed a return showing that the Government in 1932 alienated under C.P. conditions about 140,000 acres of Crown land, and again, roughly 60,000 acres of Crown lands, making a total of 200,000 acres of Crown lands selected,—I should not like to say occupied, but selected. One can declare definitely that those 200,000 acres were either indifferent country, which had been left over and not selected, within carting distance of the existing railways, or alternatively land that had been selected beyond that carting distance. If my conclusions are sound, we can say that the indifferent land selected within carting distance should be left for the time being. We cannot produce anything at a profit to-day from our best lands. Some people will declare that to be wrong, and that some farmers are making a profit under existing conditions. Those who are making a profit now are farmers who are not over-capitalised. Possibly they had some capital to start with and have gone along quietly, using their own labour and that of their families, and possibly having a fairly good area of country to work on and a good run of seasons. Such men have been able to keep down their capitalisation so that the interest payments have not become a big burden, and they are getting along quite well under existing conditions. The big

bulk of the farmers, however, are carrying a fair amount of capitalisation, which entails interest payments that render it impossible for them to produce at a profit owing to the prices now prevailing for the main commodities in which they are interested. It can be said that unless men have good land to work on, it is hopeless for them to try to make ends meet. The Government would, therefore, be doing wrong to encourage men to take up indifferent or light land. Even if it is good land, and it is outside the recognised carting distance, people should not be encouraged to select it. Holding these views, I am of opinion it would be quite sound for the Government to declare definitely that Crown lands are withdrawn from selection, and concentrate all their efforts and all the money at their command on the proper utilisation of lands already alienated. If we build the railway 30 miles south of Southern Cross, we shall immediately set about building up a case for an extension of that line. We do not wait for an extension until the land already served by the 30 miles is fully utilised and populated. We devote no attention to that aspect of the matter, and never have devoted any consideration to it. We merely say we have built a railway, and leave it to get on the best way it can. The very fact that the railway has been built for a distance of 30 miles leads to the selection of land beyond that distance, often as far away as 60 miles, in anticipation of an extension, or in the belief that some other line within carting distance will be constructed.

The Minister for Railways interjected.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: All the Crown land should be reserved. We should not encourage any settlement outside the carting distance on existing lands. I am going to give some figures that will show where we are drifting. If we build this line, it will be recognised as the first portion of a through railway. It means that we shall be building up an argument for an extension. So it has gone on until we have reached a position that is unsound from the financial point of view. During my term as Minister I built many hundreds of miles of railway. I was always depressed when I brought down a railway Bill. I knew well that the land I was going to serve was not being thoroughly utilised. We built a railway because a certain number of people were



settled in the district. The Yuna railway Bill was brought down for the same reason. A certain number of settlers were there, and they understood that the land would be served by a railway within a reasonable time. Several settlers took up land in anticipation of an extension of the railway, and created an agitation in that direction. The Government responded to the agitation, and the railway was granted to them. That sort of thing has been going on for the last 25 years, and possibly more. During a period of prosperity, when loan moneys are available, it is impossible to induce Parliament to call a halt in this regard. It was thought to be quite sound to go on under the then existing conditions. It has been impossible for Parliament to call a halt for the reasons that apply to the Yuna-Dartmoor railway, and to this particular railway. Members will support a railway proposal, not because they think it sound, but because they represent a constituency that is interested in another railway, or are interested in a railway that has already been passed by Parliament. Without being offensive I would say a kind of log rolling goes on. One member agrees to support a proposal merely because it is a continuation of the policy of railway construction. His constituents are interested in that policy, and without going into the economics of the position he says, "We have settlers within so many miles of the railway, and we want this construction policy to continue as heretofore." One member supports another in anticipation of favours to come. That may have been all right when money was plentiful and there were not large numbers of people out of work, such as is the case today. But I do not think it was all right. That kind of thing has prevailed ever since I have been associated with Parliament. There has never been a close analysis of the situation. A kind of wave has passed over this Chamber and another place, with a total disregard for the ultimate effect this policy will have upon the financial stability of the State.

Mr. Wausbrough: There has been concerted action in another way to prevent railway construction.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I do not think there has ever been concerted action on the part of Parliament, speaking generally, to prevent the construction of railways, though there may have been opposition to one par-

ticular line. I have in mind the Yarramony eastward railway. That was authorised, but we all realise it will never be built, and never can be built, because transport arrangements have been revolutionised to such an extent that the area of land is not sufficient to warrant the construction of two railways. There has been concerted action by Parliament against the construction of that line, although the necessary authorisation has been given. Generally speaking, one can declare definitely that Parliament has encouraged Government after Government to proceed with this reckless policy of railway construction, with a total disregard for whether the line, which is constructed to open up certain land, will have the desired effect of creating settlement upon such land. When we were very active in railway construction we were borrowing large sums of money. It was quite a common thing, when I was Minister for Works, to have four millions of money to spend, and we did spend many millions while I was in office, purely on railway construction. The loan funds at the time were sufficient to absorb the activities of all the people of that day. There was no surplus population worth speaking about, engaged in looking for avenues for settlement or other kinds of work. The whole of the working population was occupied in railway construction or other activities associated with loan expenditure. The loan funds were raised very largely on the basis of keeping in employment all the people within the State who needed work. We went on building railways for a limited number of settlers in various parts of the agricultural areas, but we had no need to worry from the economic point of view concerning the settlement of the land, because people were not available for that purpose. Our immigration policy was based on the existing need for settling these lands. For a number of years we encouraged people to come to our State for this purpose. When they arrived here, the attractions furnished by the work that was available, as a result of oversea borrowing, made it unnecessary for them to go through the privations of pioneer settlement. They therefore joined up with our workers, and enjoyed the prosperity of the times, due to our affluence through borrowed money. At that time we neglected to establish a sound policy of railway construction. I admit the pressure to do the right thing was not pronounced in

those days. We could go on guaranteeing to settle the land that we were serving because there were not sufficient people in the State available. We were not putting the number of people on the land we should have done. Had that been done, there would have been fewer people available for the development of the policy of railway construction elsewhere. But that day has gone, and we can no longer borrow money for the purpose of utilising the services of our population. Only a limited number of people are working to-day. Under the old conditions all were at work, practically speaking. To-day we can say, practically speaking, they are all out of work, so few are being profitably employed. Recognising the change in the economic factor, surely members will appreciate that we cannot go on under the old system of building railways merely because loan funds are available. Actually, loan funds are not available. We are utilising the limited amount that is available to us and doing work which should not be done: and because it was done in the past, there is no justification for a continuation of that policy at present. I have no hesitation in saying that the foundation of all our difficulties to-day is the fact that a huge proportion of our public debt is invested in the railways, and because the lands through which the railways are running are not occupied to anything like the extent they should be from every point of view. The land served is some of the best land in the State, and it is a reflection upon the Government that a vast area of unused land close to existing railways represents the very best land we have. The reason is that in the old days, in the best parts of the State, land was easily acquired, people were in better circumstances, and the markets justified the selection of more land than the people could use. Settlers started off by improving a certain area of that which they had selected. After experience, they found that the areas of properly cleared, properly filled and farmed land were quite sufficient to keep them busy, and give them an income which they found sufficient for the maintenance of their standard of living. The result is that the settlers allowed a percentage of their areas to remain unused, or only partially used. This unused land represents the very best land in the State, chosen because of its quality, as I have already said, in the early days of selection. Members travelling through the country would have to be blind

if they did not notice the big areas that are not cleared and that are standing practically as nature left them. Going through some of those areas, we find that if they are not improved, they are only partly improved and that they are quite adjacent to the railway, to schools and to butter factories, in fact, in close contiguity to everything that tends to make farming economically congenial. I claim that those areas of land should now be put to use; people should be put on them. The time is opportune to start the job. Our economic stability requires that this should be done. What is the use of preaching the Douglas credit system and re-organising industry, if we are not going to apply ourselves to carry out the job that is outstanding in its demands. The paramount economic need of to-day is to set to work and utilise those lands that are awaiting settlement, and in that way make our railways a possible proposition from the earning point of view, and relieve the anxieties in regard to the losses on the system, and minimise the perpetual arguments in respect of the reduction of railway workers because the earnings of the railways are out of proportion to their capital cost. It has been claimed on more than one occasion that we have a mile of railway for every hundred people in the State. Supposing that figure were correct, it would be an alarming position to anyone who made even a superficial study of economies. It must be clear that the railways cannot be made to pay under a system of that description. It must also be clear that we have over-built railways. Why add to that which is already over-burdened? There is no part of the world that attempts to carry a burden anything like that which is being attempted by this State. Let us analyse the position, though I admit it is difficult to do so. On page 52 of the Railway Commissioner's Report we find there a return of the working of the railways in relation to the population for the years ended the 30th June, 1894 to 1933. Taking that return, and then examining the "Statistical Abstract" which gives the population of the road boards and municipal districts, it is possible to get an idea of the numbers of people within a carting radius of the existing railways. I do not claim that the figures I am about to give are absolutely correct, but they are so near to accuracy, and they are so important, from the point of view that I intend to present to the House, that I should like members to follow me while I attempt

to show exactly where our population is situated. I shall endeavour to prove how many people we actually have per mile of railways, that is, what I might call the railways in the several producing areas. It is not a question of 100 people per mile of railway when we take in all the railways including the suburban lines: we have to go deeper than that. We must go into the question of how many people are being served by the railways that are developing the agricultural and pastoral districts, and then determine whether we can go on building new lines at the present time. It would appear that in the metropolitan area, from South Beach to Midland Junction, the round group of the metropolitan area, with a population of 212,421, there are 26 miles of railway and there are 8,170 people per mile of line. Those figures, of course, are quite satisfactory: it is a good proposition. If our position were generally on those lines, we would be a very sound State to-day and our trials and troubles financially would be considerably reduced, if, indeed, they existed at all. The whole cost would be distributed over so many people that the debt per head would be reduced considerably. If we had the people to carry the liability of the existing railways on the basis of 8,170 per mile, I would not be worrying the House with a speech of this description. Next taking the lines between Midland Junction and Woolgangie, including the lines up to Pindar, taking in also the Midland line, and what might be called the central group of railways, we get there an approximate population of 56,416. The mileage of the central group of railways is 1,574, and the number of people per mile of railway is only 36. I ask members to appreciate what that means from an economic point of view. Taking the next group of railways, the Great Southern and South-West lines and the branches, they serve a population which I calculate at 119,200. The railway mileage is 1,884 and the number of people per mile is 63.

Mr. Seward: Are you including the lines east of the Great Southern?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Yes. Next, the goldfields lines from Woolgangie to Laverion and Leonora, and taking in Hopetoun and Esperance, a population of roughly 24,100 is served. The railway mileage is 564 and the number of people per mile of railway is 43. As I have already said, I

have worked out these figures from the railway returns and the "Statistical Abstract" for 1931-32, which was hardly up-to-date, and since then the population of the goldfields has increased slightly. Taking the northern goldfields from Pindar to Wiluna including Sandstone, the population is 4,112 and the railway mileage 453, the number of people per mile being nine. I have figures also for the Port Hedland-Marble Bar railway.

Mr. Marshall: There are over 4,000 people in Wiluna alone.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I have admitted the difficulty of getting accuracy.

Mr. Marshall: But your figures are a long way out.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I have used the figures of the Railway Department and of the Government Statistician. I appreciate the difficulty of securing accuracy. If one could get the railway officials and the statistician to co-operate, absolute accuracy might be obtained, but that is not possible to an ordinary member. All he can do is to take the returns that are available and make his calculations accordingly. Anyhow the figures are sufficiently near the mark to warrant investigation of the question whether we can any longer accept the basis of 100 and Woolgangie, including the lines up to 100 people for each mile of railway we would not be justified in building more railways, but when we consider the number of people in the metropolitan area and in other congested centres, the proportion of population to railway mileage becomes alarming. The return of the Commissioner of Railways shows 98 people to each mile of railway. Every proposal presented to us to-day should be viewed from an economic standpoint. It is futile to proceed along the old lines of utilising our money for railway construction, regardless of whether we can settle the area or whether the railway will show a reasonable profit. Considered from the viewpoint of the unemployed, of what good will the construction of the proposed railways be? True, they will provide a certain amount of temporary work, but only temporary work. Immediately the money has been expended, the unemployed will again be in difficulties and so the trouble will continue. I submit that we should approach the problem by investigating the unutilised land served by existing railways, and use the money that is available to settle

such land with people, who to-day are not only workless, but homeless. I am of opinion that men of 55 years of age and onwards at present unemployed will never get back to work again. It is a gloomy view to take, but one has to regard the position squarely. Even though we get around the corner, of which we hear so much, and enjoy economic recovery—

Mr. Marshall: By borrowing and spending.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The work in future will be absorbed by the young men. The men of over 55 will have no hope of getting back to a reasonable standard of employment. They may get a proportion of the work and a proportion of the dole, but they will become old prematurely because of the anxiety arising from their deplorable condition and that of their families. We should not build railways merely to provide temporary employment for men on railway construction. We should save that money and husband our resources in order to give permanent employment to as many men as possible, particularly those men who are getting up in years and have large families to maintain. The man suffering the greatest anxiety in the present economic stress is the man of 55 or more whose family have grown up. He provided for his children in their younger days, thinking that they would be able to contribute to the needs of the family when he had grown old, but instead of their being able to contribute, they have become a liability. The number of young men and women out of employment is depressing indeed. The anxiety of the parents, however, increased by the fact that many of them have not a home. There are large areas of unutilised land adjacent to existing railways. It is a crime that such land should be monopolised and unused while so many people are in need. We should endeavour to make the land available for them. We shall never succeed in getting people into homes unless we associate with the homes some work of a reproductive kind. I know the State fairly well; I travel extensively through the agricultural districts and am associated with organisations that have enabled me to acquire a knowledge of the productivity of the land, and I have been impressed with the small production from large areas. I have no hesitation in saying there is abundance of land highly suitable, already

partially cleared, that could be made available for providing homes for men of large families without homes and without work.

Mr. North: You are arguing in favour of more commodities and less capital works?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Yes. Consider the psychological effect of such a scheme. If the young people were satisfied that their parents had a home in their old age, they would be relieved of considerable anxiety. If the breadwinner were out of work, but had a home, he could till the soil and produce a considerable proportion of the necessities of life, and the young people, during any period of their unemployment, could help the parents to establish themselves. The parents would be settled permanently in a home and would not be competing for the limited amount of work available. As I consider it wrong to proceed with this railway proposal, I move an amendment—

That the words "now read a second time" be struck out and the words "deferred until the Government have submitted to Parliament a report upon the area of unused or only partially used land within reasonable carting distance of existing railways and also a scheme for the more complete utilisation of such land" inserted in lieu.

On motion by Mr. Wilson, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 6.15 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Tuesday, 12th September, 1933.*

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