

Hon. A. G. JENKINS: In lieu of the words proposed to be inserted by Dr. Saw I suggest the following subclause:—

When any persons subject to examination or defention under this section are found not to be suffering from venereal disease in an infective condition they shall be entitled, as of right, to inspect any written statement made to the Commissioner and to have a verified copy of every such statement.

The CHAIRMAN: I think the hon. member had better put that amendment on the Notice Paper as an alternative to Dr. Saw's amendment.

Hon. A. G. JENKINS: Very well, I will do that.

[The President resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 6.1 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 21st October, 1915.

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Minister for Lands: 1. Papers relating to Lands Reclassification Board

(ordered on motion by Mr. E. B. Johnston). 2, Return of Agricultural Bank operations (ordered on motion by Mr. Harrison). 3, Lands Department, report for year ended 30th June, 1915.

By the Premier: Commissioner of Taxation, Seventh Annual Report.

By the Minister for Works: Municipal Corporations Act, 1906, by-laws to regulate motor and other traffic.

QUESTION — YANDANOOKA ESTATE, PARLIAMENTARY VISIT.

Mr. MALE asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, What was the cost of taking the Parliamentary party to Yandanooka last week? 2, Was a special train provided? If so, was it supplied by the Government railways, or did the Midland Railway Co. supply it, and, if so, at what cost?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, The total cost of the Parliamentary visit to the Yandanooka farm, including the special train, was £74 10s. 2, A special train was provided, for which we contributed £25 to the Midland Railway Company.

QUESTION—AGRICULTURAL BANK OPERATIONS.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM (for Mr. Harrison) asked the Minister for Agriculture: When will the return relating to Agricultural Bank operations, for which a motion was passed by the House on the 15th September, be laid upon the Table of the House?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE, in reply, presented the return in question.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE. MONEY BILLS PROCEDURE.

On motion by Mr. McDOWALL the time for bringing up the report of the joint select committee on money bills procedure was extended for a week.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. MALE (Kimberley) leave of absence for two weeks granted to the member for Wagin (Mr. S. Stubbs) on the ground of ill-health.

BILL—GENERAL LOAN AND INSCRIBED STOCK ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Brown Hill-Ivanhoe) [3.7] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is for the purpose of amending Section 18 of the General Loan and Inscribed Stock Act, which section provides that the maximum rate of interest to be paid on stock shall be 4 per cent. I think hon. members will appreciate the fact that at the present juncture it is not possible to obtain money at 4 per cent., and that it is not desirable we should attempt to raise money at the present juncture with a relatively enormous discount. In point of fact, it is better, if we can, to obtain money at par even if the rate of interest is increased, so that we may have available the money otherwise represented by discount. I am asking that the principal Act should be amended by raising the maximum rate of interest from 4 per cent. to 5. Some other States, I believe, have asked for as high a rate as 5½ per cent.

Hon. Frank Wilson: What are the latest rates that have been paid on flotation of loans?

The PREMIER: No Australian loans have been raised latterly except through the Commonwealth Government, and that loan has worked out at 4⅓ per cent. so far. It will not be possible to decide the exact rate of interest until the entire loan has been made available by the Imperial authorities to the Commonwealth Government, when the rate will be adjusted. In the meantime, we have issued Treasury bills on which we are paying 4⅓ per cent. In any case the rate of interest on the loan raised by the Commonwealth will not exceed 4½ per cent., so that this amending Bill will meet that position.

Any further money required we shall not be able to get for less than 5 per cent., unless it is raised at heavy discount. Personally, I prefer to raise loans at par. I may point out that the limitation of the rate of interest payable on stock in the General Loan and Inscribed Stock Act is really not worth anything; because when one is raising money under a limitation of 4 per cent., and is not able to obtain it at par for that rate, one has to give an equivalent by allowing a discount. The result probably may be that one pays 4½ per cent. for the whole loan. From the point of view of the bondholder it amounts to the same thing, but it is not the same thing from the point of view of the State, which receives only the amount of the difference between par and the discount. I consider that the rate of 5 per cent. for which I ask will be sufficient for the time being. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. FRANK WILSON (Sussex) [3.10]: I agree with the Premier that we shall have to increase the rate of interest beyond what it has been up to the present time, no matter how reluctant we might be to do so in normal conditions. The money market is a peculiar institution, which borrowers have to face. Borrowers must conform to the conditions of the money market at the time they want to borrow. Notwithstanding that what the Premier has said is perfectly correct—that there are many ways of getting around the limitation of interest, more especially by issuing a loan at a discount—in normal times one would be extremely reluctant to raise the rate of interest. In the event of a loan being issued at a discount, the cash returned to the Treasury is of course less, but that is overcome by issuing a loan for a greater amount. One can always meet such disabilities; but when the value of money seems to be recognised, by loans which various countries have floated, to be about 5 per cent., it would be absurd for us to restrict the Government of this State to 4 per cent., knowing full well that the value is greater than 4 per cent. and that a big discount

would have to be allowed. I quite agree with the Premier that as a rule it is well to offer a rate of interest which will bring a return as near as possible to par. Of course we do not want to borrow too much in these times, but what money we have to borrow we should endeavour to obtain at par. I do not see that this amending Bill can be objected to, and I propose to support it.

In Committee, etcetera.

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

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Council.

BILL — LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Mr. McDowall in the Chair; the Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Power to reduce price of conditional purchase land:

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I move an amendment—

That in lines six and seven the words "for a term commencing on or after the first day of January, 1910," be struck out.

There can be no reason for limiting the operation of the Bill as prescribed in the clause, because after all it is at the discretion of the Minister to reduce the price of any conditional purchase land.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I cannot accept the amendment. We must make some limit, and this limit has been put on because, generally speaking, it was from 1910 onwards that the hon. member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) increased the price of land. It was because of the criticism in regard to that increase that the Government appointed a board to investigate. To make a provision giving the Minister power to review any and all prices fixed for land would be going too far, and would be an indication to selectors of land generally that it might be as well to see whether the Minister would agree to reduce their

prices. Of course, the operations of the Bill will create anomalies, and in some instances are bound to leave the prices of land selected before 1910 higher than the amended prices of land selected since that date. That is unavoidable, for there are many small isolated areas which were selected before 1910 at fairly high prices. But under the existing Act the Minister has power to at any time review the price of land and to exercise the right to reduce the price without calling on the holder of the land to make application. After a great deal of consideration I decided that the proper thing was to recommend to Parliament that we fix the limit at 1910. Without some such limit practically all settlers of land would expect to have their prices reviewed. When the measure shall have been in operation long enough to reveal anomalies I propose to call on the land board to review those anomalies with a view to having them adjusted, but speaking generally I will not agree to the reviewing of prices fixed prior to 1910.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It is amusing to listen to the Minister's reasoning. He knows quite well that a considerable area was selected at higher than 10s. before 1910.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Sir Newton Moore increased prices before that date.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The truth is the Minister has not looked into the matter at all. His sole desire is to fix the increase of prices at a date covered by my term of office. The Minister has now exhibited in the department land priced at 20s. per acre. Indeed in many cases his prices are higher than were the prices fixed during my term. The Committee will make itself ridiculous if it passes the clause as printed. If any injustice has been done to those who selected before 1910 why should that injustice not be removed? The clause merely provides that the price may be, not shall be, reduced, notwithstanding which 1910 is prescribed as the earliest date of pricing. The Minister says that when the proper time comes he will deal with the land selected prior to that date. I hope the Minister

will reconsider his decision not to accept the amendment.

Amendment put and declared carried.

The Minister for Lands: Divide! It settles the Bill if this is carried.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	11
Noes	..	..	..	17

Majority against .. 6

AYES.

Mr. Allen	Mr. Mitchell
Mr. George	Mr. Verryard
Mr. Gilchrist	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Hardwick	Mr. A. A. Wilson
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Male
Mr. Lefroy	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Hickmott
Mr. Carpenter	Mr. Johnson
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Collier	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. B. J. Stubbs
Mr. Foley	Mr. Thomas
Mr. Jas. Gardiner	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Green	Mr. Bolton
Mr. Helmann	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I move a further amendment—

That in line 8 of paragraph (b) after "railway" the word "or" be struck out and "and" inserted in lieu.

The price of land is to be governed by the distance from a railway or a market.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There is no objection to the amendment; it is purely making the wording a little clearer. A market in this country is a port.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I move a further amendment—

That in line 8 of paragraph (a) after "or" the word "port" be inserted.

Amendment passed.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I move a further amendment—

That in paragraph (b) the words "granted on or after the first day of January, 1907," be struck out.

This limitation refers to leases granted of poison land. Why not treat all holders of pastoral leases where poison is found in

the same way? If this poison land is used it can only be used if leased on very easy terms indeed. Should not a man who selected land in 1905 have the same consideration as the man who selected in 1907?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am not prepared to convey to the selectors of the State an intimation that we are going to review the whole of the land settled from the time the colony started. Members must realise that that would make the Government's position absolutely impossible. In connection with wheat lands we appointed a board to go into the question of re-pricing where it was considered the price of the land had been unduly increased. Exactly the same thing will be done in connection with the poison areas, and the Government, on the advice of the board, fixed the date from 1907 as far as the poison land is concerned. As a result of the amendment notified by the member for Williams-Narrogin, I have again had the matter reviewed by the officers and they say that we could go back to 1905 without unduly influencing the revenue that would be lost to the State. If we accept this amendment we lose a considerable amount of revenue and we must put a limit on the amount of revenue which the State is going to lose. We find that between the years 1907 and 1905 there was a certain amount of poison land alienated at prices that ought to be reviewed, and therefore we are prepared to go back to 1905 and incur the amount of loss that will be made by going back those two years. I cannot agree with the amendment of the member for Northam to strike out the limitation altogether, but I am prepared to adopt the suggestion of the member for Williams-Narrogin and make the limit 1905 instead of 1907.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I ask the Government to accept the amendment of the member for Northam rather than the one which I have placed on the Notice Paper. In going into the matter I find that a lot of the poison land between the Williams and Collie was selected at the time the railway was authorised, about 1903 or 1904, and as a matter of fact the Govern-

ment have been reviewing the price of land in this area for some considerable time past, and a number of the people who were taken out into those areas and granted land as first class land by the land guide at Collie, who did not explain that there was poison there, have had their prices reduced a little bit, but it has not been reduced in proportion to the reduction given to the settlers who got first class land in the dry areas. I am prepared to give the Minister the names of settlers who have had one or two shillings taken off their poison land rent.

Hon. Frank Wilson: What will it amount to if the Committee pass the amendment?

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I do not know, but I do not think the number is large. If an injustice has been done at all it ought to be remedied. Any of the people who selected before 1907 will be in a worse position than they are to-day because the Bill will be used as an argument why they are not to be given relief. They will be told that Parliament has approved of relief from the date fixed in the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have already stated that if, as a result of the limitation, anomalies are created, where people who selected before 1907 find that their land is high priced compared with those who selected since 1907, it will be put right, and yet the hon. member says that these people will not receive consideration. That is unfair. The board has already partly repriced the wheat lands and they will go on with the poison lands and will reprice them. As they have proceeded they have found, owing to the Bill that they are reducing a block of land which was alienated since 1907, and possibly side by side with it they find a block which was alienated before 1907, and that the price would be higher than it was in 1907. Owing to the operation of the Bill they would immediately deal with that particular block. They have got, I admit, fully 12 months' work ahead of them, but the whole thing will be carried out by the board operating on the matter at the present time. They will deal with these anomalies also

without repricing the whole of the lands of the State.

Mr. WILLMOTT: I am prepared to accept the year 1905, and if the Minister will agree to that date I am prepared to oppose the amendment.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The arguments of the Minister for Lands would be amusing, if they were not to a certain extent so childish. He attacked one of his own party maliciously because that hon. member dared to disagree with him. If the land will be automatically adjusted why do we want the paragraph in question? Why do not the Government adjust these anomalies now? The Minister argues that he has a life tenure of office, that all is going to be right while he is there, and that it does not matter if poison leases are taken up because if there is an injustice it is going to be rectified. I am not prepared to take the Minister's word in that direction. After all it is a question of legislation. If it was a question of the Minister's word we would not want legislation. I am surprised, too, that the leader of the Country party is going to vote against an amendment which is in the interest of the settlers. Members of the Country party are going to flock across the Chamber to support the Labour Government, notwithstanding that the only member of the Labour party who knows anything about land matters has pronounced himself as against his own leaders.

The Minister for Works: He would vote to wipe us out altogether.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The hon. member has had enough for a long time past, and if he followed his own conscience he would wipe out the Government, I have no doubt.

Mr. Willmott: If we follow our own conscience we will be all right. I suppose.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The hon. member has no conscience. He lacks experience. I am surprised at the hon. member for coming to heel in this manner. Commonsense must dictate to members that the Minister is wrong in his arguments.

The Premier: The reason is that you want the member for Northam to come back to the department to safeguard its interests.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I would safeguard the interests of the department against anyone. If we can only get poison lands improved it does not matter what price is charged for them. Why should not a man who has taken up a lease prior to 1907 receive as much relief as any one else? What we hope to do is to increase the productivity of the land and that, I take it, is one of the objects of this Bill.

The Minister for Works: I am not too sure of that.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Then the Minister should not support the Bill.

The Premier: We can pay any loss out of the £83 you tried to knock off the Estimates.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I do not think the Premier can pay for anything unless he borrows money. I enter my strong protest against the bullying tactics adopted by the Government to try and force legislation through this Chamber. We should consider the Bill on its merits and should not be threatened by Ministers.

Mr. THOMSON: Unfortunately, I paired with the Attorney General and will not, therefore, be able to exercise my vote during this debate. The proposal of the member for Northam that the words should be struck out is a reasonable one. If poison lands are given to people for nothing and these people can make these lands produce wealth for the State, and prevent them from being a menace to stock holders and others, then they should be given away. People who have taken up these poison areas should not have hardships inflicted upon them.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Minister would try to make us believe that if the limitation is removed he will go back to the first selection. The Minister does not know his own Bill. I hope the House will see that justice is done to all peo-

ple in equal proportions. The Minister does not, in my opinion, mean to do very much under the Bill. I believe the present Ministry have so damaged the value of lands that something at all events will have to be done. The leader of the Country party will, I trust, reconsider his decision.

The CHAIRMAN: I would point out to the member for Williams-Narrogin that after I have dealt with this amendment I cannot take his amendment. The only course would be for the member for Northam to obtain leave to withdraw his amendment first.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: If you take the hon. member's amendment you can surely take mine.

The CHAIRMAN: The withdrawal of the amendment will have to be resolved by leave.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: If I withdraw my amendment and allow the member for Williams-Narrogin to come in, can I move my amendment later?

The CHAIRMAN: The other amendment would come in later in the paragraph.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If the member for Northam will withdraw temporarily the member for Williams-Narrogin will then move his amendment which the Government will adopt, and it will be carried. The question will be put and the member for Northam can move to delete the whole of the words. If we carry these words in the Bill as it stands the member for Williams-Narrogin cannot move his amendment.

Mr. WILLMOTT: My desire is to substitute "1905" for "1907."

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am willing to withdraw my amendment if I am permitted to move it at a later stage.

The CHAIRMAN: Unless hon. members are prepared to make up their minds I shall put the question.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: If my amendment is not carried, will it be possible for another hon. member to move to alter 1907 to 1905?

The CHAIRMAN: No.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	12
Noes	..	..	..	20
				—
Majority against	..	..	..	8
				—

AYES.

Mr. Allen	Mr. Mitchell
Mr. George	Mr. Plesse
Mr. Gilchrist	Mr. Veryard
Mr. Hardwick	Mr. A. A. Wilson
Mr. Johnston	Mr. F. Wilson
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Male

(Teller).

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Heilmann
Mr. Carpenter	Mr. Hickmott
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Johnson
Mr. Collier	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. B. J. Stubbs
Mr. Foley	Mr. Thomas
Mr. Jas. Gardiner	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Green	Mr. Wansbrough
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Bolton

(Teller).

Amendment thus negatived.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I move a further amendment—

That in line 7 the words "two shillings and sixpence" be struck out and "one shilling" be inserted in lieu.

I am moving this amendment in conformity with the recommendations of the board appointed to go out to the poison districts and advise the Government on this subject.

Mr. George: Have you their recommendations?

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: The recommendations are lengthy and valuable. On this particular point this is what the board said—

That where the cost of poison eradication has not been taken into consideration in pricing the land, and can be ascertained, it shall (in cases where the land in the opinion of the Minister is suitable for grazing only) be deducted from the price of the land, or where the land in the opinion of the Minister can be profitably cultivated, half the cost of eradication shall be deducted

from the price of the land. That is to say, if it is estimated that it has, or will, cost a settler say 5s. per acre to eradicate poison, he shall be entitled to have his rent account credited with this amount, or half this amount, as the case may be; such credit to take effect from and during the time he satisfied the Minister that he is making a bona-fide attempt to carry out the work. . . This recommendation should apply only to lands selected since 1/2/07, the date on which the old Poison lease clause was repealed, and the minimum price after deducting the cost of poison eradication should not be reduced below 1s. per acre exclusive of survey fees.

The Premier: What is the 1s. for?

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: Merely in order that the land might not be given away. The board realised that the cost of eradicating the poison would probably exceed the value of the land. The board added—

That the minimum price of any land be 1s. per acre exclusive of survey fees and the term of payment 40 years.

The Premier: A man would be 58 years old when he had finished paying for it.

Mr. Thomson: The same applies to the Workers' Homes.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: It is more difficult to get an Agricultural Bank advance on this land than on any other in the State. The Government must have had confidence in these professional officers or they would not have appointed them.

The Premier: Are you prepared to accept *in toto* every report by a board?

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: No, but the feeling of the House should be ascertained on the recommendations of the board.

Mr. FOLEY: I oppose the amendment. If we are to quibble over the difference between 1s. and 2s. 6d. an acre, the cost of settling the question will be more than it is worth.

The Minister for Lands: It will cost more to administer the department than we will receive back.

Mr. FOLEY: Having seen some of the settlers on the poison land in the Coben and Dinninup areas and having seen their work, I think it would be better to remove them than to reduce the price to 1s.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Then you will let the poison run wild.

Mr. FOLEY: The reduction will not advance settlement. It will give these settlers no better chance to make good.

The Premier: A man would pay for a thousand acres spread over 20 years the sum of £125.

Mr. FOLEY: It is right that the Agricultural Bank should not be too ready to make advances on these areas. Settlers were taken down there by land guides who, I was informed, put them on the worst affected portions, keeping the better portions for people who could afford to pay more. In many cases unsuitable people were settled on unsuitable land. It is almost impossible for the settlers to make a living owing to the poison and to their own incapability.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Do you advocate leaving these lands as Crown lands?

Mr. FOLEY: It would pay the State to take these people off that land and put them on better land east of Kukerin, where they would have a reasonable chance to make a living.

Hon. Frank Wilson: What would you do with the poison land if you took the people off?

Mr. FOLEY: There are big areas on which the poison has been eradicated being used for pastoral purposes, and the solution of the difficulty is to give men bigger areas of this land.

Mr. George: Give it to them?

Mr. FOLEY: Yes, but make a stipulation that they must eradicate the poison.

Mr. George: That was the arrangement made with the Occidental Company years ago.

Mr. FOLEY: But they were not kept up to their bargain. When we visited these areas the settlers provided a meal

fit for anyone and yet many of them had tasted no meat other than kangaroo for nine or 12 months.

Mr. GEORGE: If the hon. member had had a little more experience, he would be still more generous. Absolutely the best land we have is that infested with poison. One can pick out the heartleaf poison all the year round, but as soon as there is a fall of rain the poison springs up again. Old inhabitants tell me one can go on eradicating heartleaf for 40 or 50 years. At certain seasons of the year one can let sheep and cattle go into heartleaf poison without danger, but at other seasons it would be fatal. Horses can be let in practically all the year round, with this one exception, that they are in great danger from heartleaf after a fire. The best land in my neighbourhood is where the heartleaf poison is thickest. If the Government allowed the holders of poison lands to be free of all taxation on the one condition that they stuck to their land, it would be for the benefit of the State. If the settlers are down and out, then the State might help them to go to another place, but if they do not want to come off the poison land, they should have every assistance we can give them to keep them there. That is the only means by which we can deal with the poison land. If poison country is left, it will only become a hiding place for native fauna and especially for dingoes. While the Worsley timber station was working, there was not a native dog near Brunswick; but since the Worsley mills were closed down, dingoes have been heard, and in fact two have been shot. All the sheep farmers in that district now have to take precautions against dingoes.

The Minister for Works: Do you really think the amendment means a big relief to the settlers on poison land?

Mr. GEORGE: Many of these settlers are in a position where every shilling counts. On the question of large areas, I say that if a large area is given to either an individual or a company, the Government should make that individual or company clear it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Government fully appreciate the difficulties of the settlers on the poison areas. With a view to relieving the sufferings of those settlers a board was appointed. The board recommended, amongst other things, that the price of poison land should be reduced to 1s. per acre. The Government were not prepared to make a reduction to that extent, but agreed to render relief to the extent of reducing prices from 10s. and 7s. to 2s. 6d. per acre, which we think is reasonable. Having reviewed the situation with the assistance of expert officers of the Lands Department, the Government are of opinion that it would not be well to reduce the price below 2s. 6d. per acre.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The proper course is to get poison land settled and cleared of the poison. Apparently, hon. members calmly argue that we should cease to deal with poison country. The result of that would be that the whole State would be over-run with poison. If a man, knowing the difficulties he has to face, says, "I will tackle that block of poison land and take the poison off it," he should be given the block. The object of the board's report, which has been read this afternoon, was to give the people the land; but, in order that there might be some limit, a minimum of 1s. per acre was recommended, of course conditionally on the poison being eradicated. It is to the benefit of the State that the rich soil on which a great deal of the poison occurs should be cleared and cultivated. Once thoroughly cleared the greater part of this land would come in for intense culture. We require to have the land settled and cleared and this noxious weed destroyed. The minimum should be fixed at not more than 1s.

Mr. THOMSON: I have received requests from a number of centres in my electorate that I should endeavour to have the recommendation of the poison reclassification board carried into effect. I think the Minister should accept the recommendation of that board. It would pay the State handsomely to give this poison land away, conditionally on the

poison being properly eradicated by the settler. In the Dinninup district Sir Winthrop Hackett, by the expenditure of many thousands of pounds, has shown what can be done with poison land on a large scale. On smaller areas very good work can be done with limited means. I hope the Minister will accept the amendment.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM: In my district poison gives considerable trouble. If the minimum was fixed at 1s. it would be only in exceptional cases that the price was made as low as that.

The Minister for Lands: It would be an indication that we agreed to price all this land at 1s.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM: At Northampton there was an area of about 1,000 acres of poison, which has been known to destroy a couple of hundred pounds worth of stock in a night. After a very great deal of stock had been destroyed in this way the price of the land was so far reduced that a man selected that poison area and, at a cost of £200, eradicated the weed. In doing that he rendered an invaluable service to the people of the district. It is advisable that the price of poison land should be made as low as possible.

[Mr. Holman took the Chair.]

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: The price of poison land should certainly be reduced to a minimum. It would be well to give the Government power to reduce it down to 1s. per acre. In some places poison is thicker than in others, and it will be found too that it grows on soil of varying qualities. The Government should have the power to fix the price very low where the poison is thick or where the land on which it is growing is poor. The only way to eradicate the poison is to cultivate the land; nothing else will do it. It would be of great benefit to the State to reduce the price of poison land to a merely nominal figure. Indeed it would be profitable to give the land away, conditionally on the settlers undertaking to eradicate the poison.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: In 1911 a report was made by Messrs. Fox and Cooke of the Treasury, but was never acted on by Ministers. In this report the recommendation was made that the poison land should be priced at 6s. an acre and that from this price the cost of eradicating the poison should be deducted. That cost was set down as varying from 3s. to 6s. per acre. In 1914 we had a further report recommending that the price of poison land should be 1s. per acre. This area is not all bad. There is some good land there but we must bring the poorer land down in price. The land is capable of being improved and it ought to be improved. A number of well known persons have settled on this country and they have eradicated the poison; their properties being now valuable. Other people will do as well if they are given the opportunity. I have always held that the poison land should be practically given away in this area. Sand plain country is not worth much when the poison has to be eradicated. I do not know if the shilling per acre will cover the survey fee or not. However I support the amendment of the member for Williams-Narrogin.

Mr. FOLEY: I think it would be better to remove the settlers from this land than alter the price. There are men who have made a success in this area but these settlers have taken advantage of the labour of those settlers surrounding them and who had also made a success of their holdings. Some men will make a living by clearing the poison at 2s. 6d. while if 3s. 6d. was offered to other men they could not make a living at the price. The man who can do the work at 2s. 6d. would always make a living. Taking into consideration the small improvement that has been made in this area during the time the land has been settled then it would be far better to clear the people out of it. This land was sold to immigrants by drawing glowing pictures and with the promise of money being found by the Agricultural Bank to buy stock and machinery. These are the men who are on these poison areas and they have not a million to one chance of making

a success. It would be better to take these settlers off, and if the State had to keep the poison down, it would be more advisable than victimising a few settlers. There are many men on this land who never wished to go there, but they were bludgeoned to go on to this land by past Governments, and it is up to some Government, whether Labour or Liberal, to free them from the position they are in to-day.

Mr. WILLMOTT: There is some excellent land in the Dinninup area, and there is some poor land also. It is a very large area, but to say the Dinninup area consists of poor land smothered with poison is saying what is not correct. I am sorry to say that some settlers were placed on some portions of the Dinninup area which is to-day smothered in poison, although some of the settlers have been there eight or nine years. The very light nature of the soil makes it almost impossible to eradicate the poison. If it was heavy stiff soil, by tamping and excluding the air the poison could be got rid of. In these light sandy soils one cannot do that. With a fairly generous rainfall poison springs up immediately. What we should do is to settle our better class of land first and leave our poorer class of land to be leased when there is no first or second class land available to be taken up.

The Premier: We have been settling all the best land in the past, and the result is that the poor devils who come forward now are getting only second and third class land.

Mr. WILLMOTT: There is some chance, if we make the minimum price for poison lands low enough, that some people would come along and make use of them. I cannot see why the Minister for Lands should object to have the power to reduce the price of this land to 1s. per acre. This would only be a minimum price after all.

The Premier: The danger would be that the minimum price would become the maximum price.

Mr. WILLMOTT: I am in favour of reducing the price from 2s. 6d. to 1s.

I think we should be considering the interests of the State in doing so.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have been trying to find out from *Hansard* whether the member for Northam, who is so anxious to reduce the price to 1s. to-day, ever supported an increase of the price in connection with the Land Act Amendment Act of 1906. I find that he was a member of the Moore Government, which introduced the Amending Land Act. Not one voice was raised in the Chamber in that year against the increase in the price for poison areas.

Hon. J. Mitchell: What was the price before that?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: One shilling an acre. The Premier of that day said it seemed to him that the time had arrived when the State should refuse to part with its estate at 1s. per acre, even though on some portion of the land poison plant was in evidence—

Hon. J. Mitchell: That was a fixed price.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Premier of the day went on to say that it had been proved that, if dealt with systematically, the poison plant could be eradicated cheaply, and that in future these lands would be treated as grazing lands at 3s. 9d. an acre. This shows clearly that the hon. member was in accord with this at the time. He was a member of the Government which introduced the Bill. If the land is not worth 2s. 6d. an acre, it is not worth anything at all. The State is put to some expense if the land is settled, and it will take about 2s. 6d. an acre to cover the expense that it is necessary to incur in connection with the land. We are practically, therefore, giving the land free, because what is charged will only pay the expenses in connection with the administration of the land which is taken up. I agree with the leader of the Opposition that when we decry the land of the State we are doing a great injury to Western Australia. No one has done more to decry the best interests of the State than members in opposition to the present Government. This is another attack on the value of our land.

which will have a tendency to bolster up the statements made in the *Age*, the *Argus*, and other newspapers in the East—is another attack on the value of our land, in Western Australia. We shall be doing an injury to the State if we say that any of our land is not worth 2s. 6d.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Minister says that, because Sir Newton Moore believed in this principle, I must have believed in it. Poison land was at a fixed price of 1s. an acre at that time. All we ask now is that the Minister shall have power to reduce the price to 1s. an acre.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	15
Noes	..	..	..	21

Majority against .. 6

AYES.

Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Robinson
Mr. George	Mr. Smith
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Varyard
Mr. Hardwick	Mr. Wansbrough
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Johnston	Mr. F. Wilson
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Male
Mr. Mitchell	(Teller).

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Mullaney
Mr. Carpenter	Mr. O'Loughlin
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Plesse
Mr. Collier	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Foley	Mr. B. J. Stubbs
Mr. Jas. Gardner	Mr. Taylor
Mr. Green	Mr. Thomas
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Heltmann	Mr. A. A. Wilson
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Bolton
Mr. McDowall	(Teller).

Amendment thus negatived.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I move an amendment—

That, after the words "survey fees" in paragraph (b), the following be added:—"and the maximum price, exclusive of the value of improvements (if any) and survey fees, shall not exceed two shillings per acre if the land is situated more than ten miles from a railway, or three shillings per acre if within ten miles, but more than five miles from a railway, or four shillings

per acre if within five miles from a railway."

In regard to the land within the zones shown on the map produced by the Minister for Lands, we have been given a schedule showing the maximum price, so that, if this Bill is carried, the settlers in the wheat areas and within the zones may know exactly what the maximum price according to the quality of their land is. I am sure the Minister for Lands will see the justice of putting the settlers in these poison areas on the same basis. Under the proposal of the Government, if the clause is carried, no one in the poison districts will have any idea at all of what reduction in price is going to be given to them, or whether any reduction at all will be given. For ten years an agitation has been going on for a reduction of the rates of poison land. In 1911 there were from 10 to 20 applicants for every block of good land in the wheat areas. At the time, a commission appointed by the member for Northam was going into these poison districts, with a view to giving people relief from the prices they were being charged for their land. The people in these districts feel that they have had a good many confidence tricks played on them in regard to securing reductions on their poison lands. I have great misgivings as to whether the people on these lands will get relief unless a maximum price is fixed. I am not absolutely wedded to the prices outlined in the amendment. If the Minister is prepared to accept the amendment with an increase of 1s. or so, that will suit me, but it is a most unfair and invidious distinction to make between the poison areas and the wheat belt. The proposals of the Government show a maximum price for the wheat belt and no maximum price for the land in the poison areas. It was significant that the Minister gave no indication of what he proposed in the poison areas, although I admit he has outlined in an indefinite fashion a measure of relief. In view of the strong recommendations for relief that were made by the two commissions which visited the district, I ask the Government to accept the amendment I have

moved, or at least add to the schedule the maximum price for poison lands.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Minister ought to indicate what his intentions are in the matter. It was quite wrong for the member for Williams-Narrogin to say that the members of the board which investigated the conditions on the poison areas were political agents. They were sent down there to advise the Government, and we who were in power at that time intended to be guided by that advice and to amend the law if necessary, and to give relief to the people. I wish the House to believe that the commission we appointed was not a political but a business commission, intended to assist the people, and it was not my fault that their report was not given effect to, because the report had not come in when I left office.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In regard to the fixing of the maximum price on poison lands as compared with wheat lands, it should be clear to hon. members that wheat areas are worked on a definite basis, namely, rainfall, railway facilities and soil. Each of those can be applied generally, but when we are dealing with poison lands we cannot deal with them generally. The price of land depends on the quantity of poison on the individual blocks. Therefore we have to deal with the individual blocks, whereas in the wheat areas we deal with the whole area. We ask the House to agree to a minimum of 2s. 6d.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I am sorry the Minister cannot tell us anything more definite. If it is possible to have a minimum price fixed for the different parts of an area in the wheat belt, I fail to see why we cannot get a schedule for the poison areas. I wish to repeat my fears, based on long years of experience, that these people are not going to get that measure of relief for which they have so long looked. The Minister has not said that the people on the poison areas will get a reduction in price on the same basis as the settlers in Zone C.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have told the hon. member already that our desire is to do the same to the people on

the poison lands as we intend to do to those on the wheat areas. But I cannot fix the maximum, because the maximum will be determined by the quantity of poison on each block.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: The Government should include the poison lands in the schedule just as readily as they are going to include the whole of the wheat areas in it.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I move an amendment—

That in the proviso all the words after "credit" in line 3 be struck out.

My object is to make it compulsory for the Minister to credit any excess of rent paid during past years, to the rents immediately following. The Minister's idea is that where the price of land is reduced, the excess paid since 1910 is to be credited to the concluding years of the leases. That would be unfair. If a man has paid more during the past five years than he should have paid, he is entitled to a refund in cash. It would be futile to ask for this, but the excess should certainly be credited to the next succeeding rents. The Minister might keep some of this money for 20 years without paying interest on it and yet, where he has lent money to settlers to pay rent arrears, he is charging them interest. Is that fair?

Mr. PLESSE: There is every justification for the amendment. Many leaseholders are paying 6 per cent. interest for advances by the Industries Assistance Board to meet arrears of rent. This Bill is an admission that unfair payments have been made by the settlers in the way of rent in consequence of the land having been unfairly priced.

The Premier: You do not expect us to go back ever since Responsible Government and correct every injustice which has occurred.

Mr. PLESSE: If the Premier is out to correct injustices why not do so? When the Great Southern lands were purchased, those who were buying land on time payment from the company were given the benefit of the Government price of 10s. an acre and were credited for any

excess payments made to the company. That encouraged the great settlement which took place there.

The Premier: I decline to forego rents until the excess payments are exhausted.

Mr. PLESSE: Reasonable consideration is being given settlers, but let it be put on a business footing. The Minister's proposal would be an injustice.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The Industries Assistance Board are charging the farmers 6 per cent. interest on advances. If the Government hold these excess moneys till the end of the term, will they pay the settlers interest at the rate of 6 per cent.?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Members infer that every farmer in the State has received assistance from the board but there are hundreds who have not required it. Those who are paying 6 per cent. on advances represent only a section of the farming community. Surely a man, who has paid his rents on the due dates without going cap in hand to the Government for money at 6 per cent., which at that rate is cheap, should receive some consideration. The man who has had to borrow should not be the only one to receive consideration.

Mr. Plesse: You forget it has meant financial exhaustion for those men to pay their rents.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is possible to find successful and unsuccessful farmers side by side on land of equal quality. On a given date, the rent must be paid. If the man could not pay we lent him the money and hundreds of farmers did not require this assistance. From that date we reduce his payment to the State because we are calling on him to pay only 6d. per acre. Many settlers have gone beyond the three years stage and will be immediately reduced from 1s. or 1s. 6d. to 6d per acre per year, and we will lose that revenue which, on our wheat lands, represents roughly £30,000. It is wrong for the member for Toodyay to suggest we are doing an injustice. There should be some recognition of the consideration the Government have extended to settlers. We cannot make refunds in addition to losing £30,000 of revenue. I want hon. members to realise

that the Government are making a material contribution to the settlers by the reduction in land rents.

Mr. PIESSE: The point I wish to make is that those unfortunate settlers who have had to apply to the Farmers' Assistance Board or the Industries Assistance Board for advances with which to pay their rents would be charged six per cent. on those advances notwithstanding the fact that by this Bill the Government admit that the land rents which those settlers have paid have been unfairly high.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): All this talk about the settlers having paid is a pure figment of the imagination. They have paid nothing yet. They owe. If they cannot make a living on the land, let them come down to my boarding house.

Mr. THOMSON: The amendment of the member for Northam is perfectly reasonable.

The Premier: You do not believe that. You are only pandering to popular opinion.

Mr. THOMSON: The Premier should be the last to make innuendoes of that nature. The Government admit that the settlers have been overcharged.

The Premier: Who is responsible for that?

Mr. THOMSON: The question of who is responsible does not affect the position. If a private individual has overcharged me, I apply to him for immediate repayment of the amount of the overcharge, and the same thing applies to the Government and the settlers.

The Premier: Which is preferable, to have the conditions proposed by the Bill or to continue the existing conditions?

Mr. THOMSON: That is an unfair question. The amount overcharged to farmers should be placed to their credit immediately. I do not think the Honorary Minister was serious in his remarks. If Parliament considers the price charged for land too high and determines to reduce the price, it is only justice that the money should be made immediately available to those to whom it is due.

The PREMIER: I desire to keep out of this discussion as far as possible, but I must reply to the members for Katingann and Toodyay. I am surprised to hear those gentlemen on this particular Bill talk about their desire to do justice. Are they prepared to do justice to the State as well as to the farming community? Following to their natural conclusions the arguments used by those hon. members, it would be fair for the State to make retrospective claims in cases where it has been found that land has been sold too cheap. The cry for justice is heard only when the farmer is to get something back. Why should not we make retrospective increases on land sold too cheaply?

Mr. Thomson: Because it would be absurd.

The PREMIER: I know it would be absurd; but on the arguments which have been used by hon. members opposite it would be justice. Strictly, we are only entitled to rectify matters from the time the Bill is passed; but we are applying the reduction as far back as 1920. I hope hon. members will appreciate that. The State cannot possibly afford to allow the amount of the retrospective reduction to be paid to the farmers in cash, or to allow that amount to be put against rents due for the next two years. If we had a surplus on revenue account, we could do that, and we would do it without complaining. Under present financial conditions, however, it is out of the question. Let hon. members bear in mind that under this Bill land rents will be reduced to 6d. per acre per annum. That represents a substantial concession to the farmers.

Mr. Male: What is the amount at stake?

The PREMIER: I know it is too much for the State to lose over and above the revenue loss which will be incurred. The proposals of the Government in existing circumstances represent justice to the farmers and justice to the State.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Government want the credit and also want the cash. It is ridiculous for the Premier

to rail at hon. members. The Bill is designed to reduce the price of land which was sold before I became Minister for Lands.

The Premier: No. The Bill is designed to reduce the amount of rent as from 1910.

Sitting suspended from 5.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: This Bill does not deal entirely with land sold in my time. It deals also with land that has been sold since; the amendment which we are now seeking to make is one which will afford protection to those who have paid in advance. Apparently Ministers think it is a crime for a settler to pay in advance. The amount involved is very little indeed and the Premier need have no fear for his revenue.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I move a further amendment—

That the second proviso be struck out.

Will the Minister tell us that he is serious in this proposal. The Bill is supposed to be one to help those who need help, but the second proviso is absolutely unfair inasmuch as it says that the clause shall not apply to those who are mostly in need of assistance.

Mr. THOMSON: The Minister ought to agree to this proviso being deleted. If a man's rent is reduced, it may be that he is in arrears to the extent of six or 12 months, and the reduction may mean that he is in credit. According to the intention of the Government it is proposed to compel a man to borrow money from the Industries Assistance Board and pay 6 per cent. for it, in spite of the fact that under the Bill, which may then be law, he may have a credit. It will not inflict any hardship on the Government to delete the proviso.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Hon. members are arguing that an injustice should be done. The proviso means that before the measure can apply, everybody

must be on an equal footing. To-day thousands of our settlers have complied with the law and paid their rents right up to December, but there are hundreds of others who have not paid, and we simply say that, in common justice and before the Act can apply, everyone shall have paid the rents due. Hon. members, by asking us to strike out the proviso, want us to discriminate and give the same consideration to the man who has not paid as to the man who has. The Bill would be unjust without the proviso.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Will the Minister explain the position of the settlers who were originally 60 miles away from a railway and who may now be 20 miles from a railway? Are they to be charged on the basis as though they had had a railway from the time they took up the land?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In repricing the land we have to recognise Parliamentary authority to build railway lines as if the line was actually there. Take the Kondinin-Merredin line; that is authorised and in repricing the land, the prices will be based as if the line had been actually completed. There are certain areas settled to-day where men are too far from existing lines and where railway construction has not been authorised. In that case the price will be based on the relative distance from the authorised line.

Mr. WANSBROUGH: In regard to the line referred to it will be another three years before the settlers can expect to get it. Why should they be penalised to that extent?

The Minister for Lands: Every settler had had to suffer at different times.

Mr. WANSBROUGH: In addition to suffering the injustice of being without the railway for another three years, they have been in that unfortunate position for the last five or six years. I agree with the member for Northam. I do not think it right that these people should be penalised to the extent they are, in view of the fact that already they have been suffering for a number of years.

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

Ayes	15
Noes	17

Majority against	..	2
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AYES.	
Mr. Allen	Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Robinson
Mr. George	Mr. Veryard
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Wansbrough
Mr. Hardwick	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. F. Willson
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Gilchrist
Mr. Lefroy	(Teller)

NOES.	
Mr. Angwin	Mr. McDowall
Mr. Carpenter	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Chesson	Mr. O'Loughlin
Mr. Collier	Mr. Plesse
Mr. Foley	Mr. B. J. Stubbs
Mr. Jas. Gardner	Mr. Thomas
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Heltmann	Mr. Bolton
Mr. Johnson	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—Annual rent under conditional purchase leases not to exceed 6d. per acre:

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The clause ought to be struck out. The value of land is a relative one, and the term of years should be relative also. The term makes all the difference to the price of the land. I hope the Minister will allow the clause to be deleted, in which case I have a new clause to move in its place.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The clause represents a fair provision. The ambition of the Government is to put everyone on the same level in paying 6d. per acre per annum. If, as the hon. member desires, we make it 20 years or 30 years, we will be getting away from that principle.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Minister is illogical. Beyond 15s. the Minister charges higher than 6d. to cover the total amount in 30 years. Land valued at 25s. will pay 10d. per acre per annum.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 4—Power to average the price of cultivable and grazing land comprised in the same lease.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Is it possible to do as the clause proposes?

The Minister for Lands: Yes.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Under either Part V. or Part VI.?

The Minister for Lands: Yes.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: But the improvement conditions under the respective parts are totally different. Under the clause a man will be able to acquire first-class land without performing any conditions of residence, and without being subjected to the higher scale of improvements.

The Minister for Lands: We can pool the improvements.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: But it penalises the man who does not live on the land, by making him provide extra improvements. That cannot be done under the clause. The lease will probably be issued under Part VI. That is not fair, because the conditions and improvements are totally different.

The Minister for Lands: It is not unfair either to the country or to the settler. He will be subject to the conditions in the Act.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: But there is one set of conditions for first-class land and another set for second-class. The Minister proposes to sell first-class land under second-class improvement conditions. Under this proposal it will be possible for a man to hold first-class land and evade the usual conditions.

The Minister for Lands: The clause does not interfere with his obligations in regard to improvements. It is simply to enable us to issue one lease instead of two or three.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: But the Minister will issue the lease under either Part V. or Part VI.

The Minister for Lands: It all depends.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It must be one or the other, because it is so provided in the clause.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The clause in no way interferes with improvements. It aims at amalgamating the leases instead of issuing two or three. The obligation in regard to improvements

will remain. The improvement conditions are provided for in a separate section of the Act and will still apply. The clause will merely effect an economy in regard to the leases.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: One set of improvements and conditions is provided under Section 68 relating to grazing land and a different set under Section 55 relating to agricultural land. This clause will not work in the best interests of the State, but will lead to confusion. I suggest that it be negatived.

Mr. WANSBROUGH: I cannot follow the argument of the member for Northam because Subclause 2 makes the position absolutely clear.

Mr. WILLMOTT: If the greater portion of the land is first-class it will come under Part V., and if the greater portion is grazing land it will come under Part VI.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Under different conditions of improvement.

Mr. WILLMOTT: The improvements depend on the class of land.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Will not a lot of first-class land get off with second-class improvements?

Mr. WILLMOTT: I cannot see how that can happen.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The clause provides that the preponderating class of land shall decide the class. If the argument of the member for Northam were correct it would cut both ways.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Not with the same individual.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is true, but the difficulties are so great departmentally that the under secretary has pressed for this amendment. The clause will not interfere with the improvements under the lease. We shall merely issue one lease instead of two or three leases.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The residence conditions have always been considered important. Under non-residence conditions the Act insists upon 50 per cent. more improvements. The Minister proposes to disregard the improvement con-

ditions and, in order to make it more convenient for the department, issue one lease for two classes of land. This will operate in the interests of the man who does not live on his land.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: The improvements ought to apply as at present.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Yes, but this clause will favour the speculator. It would be a pity to depart from the compulsory improvement conditions.

The Minister for Lands: It has been done only on the urgent representation of the under secretary who has had extensive experience.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I recognise he is a very capable man, but it is for us to say what the improvement conditions shall be.

The Minister for Lands: We are not interfering with the improvement conditions.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It is of no use saying that. The man who does not reside on his land will be able to escape the penalty in the way of improvements. The Minister is encouraging the speculator and the city dweller and not the man who resides on his land.

Mr. HARRISON: Does this clause interfere with the amalgamation of improvements?

The Minister for Lands: No.

Mr. HARRISON: It seems clear that the improvements will have to be carried out as faithfully as they have to be under the old Act.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Including the residential conditions?

Mr. HARRISON: I assume that the conditions will have to be carried out exactly as under the old Act. The main thing is to encourage the productivity of the soil.

Hon. Frank Wilson: No dummy should be allowed to hold the land.

Mr. HARRISON: People who want to go into the thing for money could easily get someone to select it and so defeat the Act. This will be a cleaner way of doing it than the old way.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 5, 6, 7—agreed to.

Clause 8—Amendment of Section 14 of Act of 1909:

Mr. WILLMOTT: What is the meaning of this clause which seeks to amend Section 14 of the Act of 1909?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Under the Land Act, passed during the term of office of the member for Northam, a provision was inserted that the cost of carrying out of survey work should be transferred from revenue to loan, and the land revenue had to recoup loan for the amount of money spent out of loan on surveys. Provision was also made that each year loan funds had to be recouped from revenue by what was known as the land improvement fund. When the hon. member introduced this no provision was made for the utilisation of the money, and whilst we have the money we cannot use it. The proposed amendment of the Act will enable the fund to be utilised as Parliament authorises, otherwise the fund would be credited and go on the books of the Treasury and we would have no power to use it. It is true that it is being used to-day, but any Government would do so and would not allow money to lie idle.

Mr. Willmott: What is the amount?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I think it is about £25,000 a year and that it has been in operation for some three years. I do not know the exact amount.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 9—agreed to.

New clause—Amendment of Section 136:

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I move—

That the following be added as a new clause:—"Section one hundred and thirty-six of the principal Act is hereby amended by omitting the following words, namely, 'pay the same within thirty days from the due day, together with a fine of twopence in the pound, and if he fails to pay as last aforesaid he shall pay the same within sixty days from the due day, together with a fine of sixpence in the pound, and if he fails to pay as last aforesaid he shall pay the same within ninety days from the due day; together with a

fine of one shilling in the pound," and inserting in place thereof 'be liable to a fine of twopence in the pound per month or portion of a month while such rent continues in arrear'; and by adding to the first paragraph of the section the following provisos:—"Provided that where an extension of time for payment of rent has been approved by the Under Secretary for Lands in writing, the fine shall, during such period of extension, be at the rate of one penny in the pound per month or portion of a month: Provided also that the Minister may in his discretion waive any such fines: Provided also that no conditional purchase lease shall be forfeited for default in payment of rent until such rent is in arrear for one year, unless the Minister is satisfied that the land comprised in the lease is unimproved or has been abandoned by the lessee."

This deals with the question of fines. For a number of years there have been complaints regarding the high incidence of the fines charged to settlers whose rents were in arrears. At the present time the fine is 2d. in the pound for the first month or part of the month; 6d. in the pound for the second month or part of the month, and 1s. in the pound for the third month or part of the month. The Government have recognised the unfair incidence of this penalty, which has always been enforced by previous Administrations since the Land Act came into operation. Fifteen months ago Mr. Bath said that he would no longer enforce the fine, and that he proposed to introduce legislation for the imposition on distressed farmers of a fine of, I think, 5 per cent. or 6 per cent. I suggest in the amendment that the fine should be at the rate of 10 per cent. per annum on a settler who without communicating with the department wilfully allows his rent to fall into arrears. I think that is high enough to make it unprofitable for people paying large land rents to let them slide. We have been alarmed to hear that settlers with well established holdings would be liable to forfeit them if they did not pay

their rent. I think this House should take a stand in such cases. I trust the Minister will see the justice of the proposal in view of the attitude taken up by Mr. Bath and approved of by the Government.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I cannot agree to the addition of the new clause. There is quite a number of amendments which the department and the Government would like to see made to the principal Act. This is not a Bill for generally amending the Land Act, and consequently the Government limit it to the question of re-pricing and other clauses dealing with this question or directly affecting the revenue of the country. We believe that a good deal of expenditure can be saved without any injury to the people of the State. There is, for instance, the publication of land rents, which is a huge expenditure and an absolute waste of money. Another direction in which a saving can be effected is in the amalgamation of the leases which we have just debated. Seeing that the Government have denied themselves the insertion of many amendments which are wanted, it would be unfair for them to adopt any amendment outside those already in the Bill. We have limited the Bill for the purposes for which it was introduced, and we cannot go beyond that.

Mr. GEORGE: The Minister has partly given himself away. The Bill, I presume, has for its genesis the desire to act fairly to people who were thought not to have been liberally treated before. We understand that what the member for Williams-Narrogin has embodied in his amendment has been practically agreed to and has been the practice of the Department for some considerable time.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Not entirely, but they have waived the fines.

Mr. GEORGE: They have acknowledged the principle. The Government cannot object to going a step further, and putting their principle into legal form. The Minister for Lands does not contend that the amendment is unfair, or against the interests of the

State. As to his main objection, I may point out that certain provisions of the Bill are not exactly within its professed limits. The principle of this new clause having been admitted and even put into practice, why should not the clause be placed on the statute-book?

The Premier: Dozens of amendments have been suggested which we have not accepted.

Mr. GEORGE: But this amendment has appeared on the Notice Paper. The question of the right of the Chamber to improve legislation is involved.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	14
Noes	..	..	..	21

Majority against .. 7

AYES.

Mr. Allen	Mr. Robinson
Mr. George	Mr. Smith
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Veryard
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Wansbrough
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Mitchell	Mr. F. Wilson
Mr. Nairn	Mr. Gilchrist

(Teller)

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Carpenter	Mr. O'Loughlin
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Plesse
Mr. Collier	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Foley	Mr. B. J. Stubbs
Mr. Jas. Gardiner	Mr. Taylor
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Thomas
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Heltmann	Mr. A. A. Wilson
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Bolton
Mr. McDowall	

(Teller)

New clause thus negatived.

New clause:

Mr. WILLMOTT: I move—

That the following be added as a new clause:—Except in special areas notified in the "Government Gazette" and suitable for close settlement, or having a special value, the price of ordinary unimproved first-class land situated within five miles of a railway shall not exceed fifteen shillings an acre, and if beyond five miles, but within ten miles, of a railway, shall not exceed thirteen shillings an acre,

and if beyond ten miles from a railway shall not exceed eleven shillings an acre ; and the price of ordinary unimproved second-class land situated within five miles of a railway shall not exceed eight shillings an acre, and if beyond five miles, but within ten miles, of a railway, shall not exceed six shillings and sixpence an acre, and if beyond ten miles from a railway shall not exceed six shillings an acre ; and the price of ordinary unimproved third-class land situated within five miles of a railway shall not exceed five shillings an acre, and if beyond five miles, but within ten miles, of a railway, shall not exceed four shillings and three pence an acre, and if beyond ten miles from a railway shall not exceed three shillings and ninepence an acre. In giving effect to Section two of this Act, the provisions of this section shall apply.

The Minister has stated that this is a re-pricing Bill, and therefore my amendment must be entirely in order. I consider that the new clause would very much improve the Bill. It affirms as a principle that the maximum price of land shall be 15s. per acre, except in areas suitable for close settlement or having a special value. Zones A and B are priced at 25s. and 20s. per acre respectively.

The Minister for Lands : Those zones represent land of special value.

Mr. WILLMOTT : That is a wild assertion.

The Minister for Lands : Because of their rainfall.

Mr. WILLMOTT : Monumental ignorance speaks. I have sufficient faith in the knowledge and capacity of the men who made the map which hangs on the wall of this Chamber to know that they would have proceeded differently had they been aware than an arbitrary line was to be drawn. I consider that the schedule should be embodied in the Bill. The policy of this State should be to settle people on the land, and not to retard land settlement by dragging extortionate prices out of the people.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON : I protest against the Country party stealing our policy.

Mr. Willmott : You dare not voice it.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON : The leader of the Country party wants the people to think that he has brought forward this proposal as something emanating from his new organisation. I want the people to know that this policy of the 15s. maximum was put forward by the late Minister for Lands, approved by Cabinet, and was enunciated in the Premier's policy speech 15 months ago, before there was a Country party in the Legislative Assembly. It is my intention to support the hon. member. I hope the Minister will explain the alteration which has been made since last night on the map which appears in the Chamber, and which alteration affects the re-pricing under this clause.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS : The hon. member has informed the Committee that this is part of the Government policy. I want to repudiate that. I would be sorry to be associated with a clause of this description. It is a totally impracticable clause. It cannot be applied, and it is not worth the paper it is written on. It starts by admitting that a hard and fast maximum price cannot be fixed. It is because A and B are special areas that they are not included in the 15s. ; they are not included because the land is unquestionably cheap at 25s. When the repricing was done and was submitted to Mr. Bath, that gentleman prepared a recommendation to Cabinet. Cabinet were not dealing with Zones A and B. Cabinet knew exactly what they were dealing with, and when the repricing was started, the board was instructed to reprice the land that had been increased since the year 1910, and the land which was dealt with is the land in C, D, and E. The member for Williams-Narrogin, however, has scored over me on one little point. In his electorate, by a slight misfortune, there is a small section which comes under Class B, and on that £1 has to be paid instead of 15s. Because of that the hon. member thinks the Bill is worthless.

Mr. E. B. Johnston : That is not so.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: When the matter was referred to Cabinet, the repricing board, consisting of Messrs. Canning, Fox, and Lefroy, were appointed. They found, on investigation, that there was a small portion of the land in Zones A and B which was alienated in 1910, and consequently to deal with that land, they would have to deal with those two zones. The matter was submitted to me, and it was the first time that I, as Minister, knew that the areas referred to came under the repricing scheme. Mr. Bath, even, was not aware that the good land referred to in Zones A and B was included in the repricing. I pointed out to Cabinet that Zones A and B would have to be dealt with, because we were dealing with land which had been alienated since 1910, but by making 15s. apply to Zone C, we were absolutely carrying out our policy.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You did not have a zone when you adopted that policy.

The Premier: Do you suggest that none of our land is worth more than 15s. an acre?

Mr. Willmott: You as Treasurer only think of filthy lucre.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: With regard to the amendment, in addition to the defects to which I have referred, it alludes to "ordinary first class land." I would like to know the definition of "ordinary first class land."

Mr. Willmott: Land inside a 12in. rainfall and not more than five miles from a railway.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But the hon. member does not say that. Then the hon. member's amendment goes on to refer to ordinary second class land, and ordinary third class land. Those words do not convey anything. The hon. member bases the value of land purely on the question of distance from a railway; the rainfall is not taken into consideration at all. We cannot base the value of land on the distance from a railway. That may be a guiding factor, but it is not the only factor. It is very unwise to fix a maximum price; we fix a minimum price, and from that it is for the Government to define its policy.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Minister told the Committee it never was the policy of the Government to touch the land in Zones A and B. As a matter of fact the whole of that land was sold during my term. It was referred to in the minute by Mr. Bath. Mr. Bath's recommendation became the policy of the Government, but the Government soon saw that it would not work. It never has been a question of price with these people, and the reclassification board said so. It is a question now of affording relief in the early stages, a question of small payments for the first 10 years.

Mr. Willmott: The land should be free for the first five years.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I have never heard the hon. member on that point. The question of early payments is deserving of the utmost consideration. If the hon. member will move to make the land free for the first few years I will support him. It is no real help to the settler to spread a small modicum of help over 30 years. Would the hon. member like to sell his land in the South-West for 15s. spread over 30 years? There is swamp land down near Bridgetown that would fetch many times 15s.

Mr. Willmott: I have provided for that in my amendment.

The Premier: The Minister could do as he liked under that amendment.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Minister's proposals are no better than the proposal of the hon. member, even where the Minister applies his proposals to 15s. land, because he insists that they shall pay from the jump. The Bill does not provide for any reduction of the payments of the past.

The Premier: Read the last paragraph of the amendment.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The late Minister for Lands recommended that 15s. should be the price, and that it should apply to all land in the wheat area. That was just before the 1914 elections. Cabinet adopted the 15s. proposal, but how have they carried it out? We know, too, how they have extended

consideration to the settlers in regard to these payments. It would be wrong to put any maximum in the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. E. B. Johnston) referred to the alteration in the map. That was due to representations made by the Midland Railway Co. They took exception to their land being coloured as having been repriced, and we altered the map in compliance with their request.

New clause put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	8
Noes	..	..	..	24

Majority against .. 16

AYES.

Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Willmott
Mr. George	Mr. A. A. Wilson
Mr. Hickmatt	Mr. Griffiths
Mr. Johnston	(Teller)
Mr. Wansbrough	

NOES.

Mr. Allen	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Angwin	Mr. O'Loughlin
Mr. Carpenter	Mr. Robinson
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Collier	Mr. Smith
Mr. Foley	Mr. B. J. Stubbs
Mr. Gilchrist	Mr. Taylor
Mr. Green	Mr. Thomas
Mr. Heltmann	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Johnson	Mr. F. Wilson
Mr. Lafroy	Mr. Bolton
Mr. McDowall	(Teller)
Mr. Mitchell	

New clause thus negatived.

New clause:

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I move—

That the following be added as a new clause:—"Whenever a lease under Part V. or Part VI. of the principal Act is forfeited for default in payment of rent, if all the conditions of the lease relating to improvements were complied with to the date of forfeiture, no conditional purchase lease of the forfeited land shall be granted except at a premium for such improvements, to be ascertained by putting up the lease for sale by auction. The auction shall be held by some person to be appointed by the Minister under section one hundred and fifty-eight of the principal Act,

at such place as the Minister may determine, and shall be advertised in such manner as the Minister may think fit. The premium shall be payable within such time and by such instalments (if any) as the Minister may direct; and, after payment of the expenses of and incidental to the sale, such premium shall be applied in payment of the rent and fines due under the forfeited lease and other moneys (if any) due by the lessee to the Department of Lands and Surveys or to any other Government Department or institution, and the balance (if any) shall be payable to the lessee of the forfeited lease."

This money outstanding to be debited to the lessee, is really in the same position as money owing to a mortgagee. A mortgagee is compelled to submit the land mortgaged to him to auction, and, after satisfying the debt, to hand back the balance of the proceeds to the owner. The Government ought to be willing to take up the same position. Sometimes land is forfeited after rent has been paid and improvements effected for 10 years, and the money thus invested should be protected.

Mr. Smith: Would the buyer stand in the same position?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: In the same position as the outgoing lessee.

The Minister for Lands: Supposing it did not realise sufficient?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Then it would revert to the Crown.

The Minister for Lands: Why go to the expense of a sale by auction?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The expense would be infinitesimal.

The Minister for Lands: The Act gives permission for sale by auction.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The proposed new clause will make it obligatory on the Government to submit a forfeited holding to auction, but only when the improvements have been fully effected and when the only default is in payment of rent.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Act provides for forfeited blocks to be submitted to auction. This course was followed for a number of years but

was discarded because often we went to the trouble and expense of advertising and holding a sale and did not get a sufficient bid. The present practice is that, when the block is forfeited, the improvements are valued by the department and if, after the liabilities to the State have been met, there is a surplus, it goes to the original lessee. We have tried both systems, and the present is the more satisfactory.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: When a lessee forfeits his holding he has no rights under the Act.

The Minister for Lands: We always make a refund if there is a surplus.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The rents paid are never taken into consideration but are lost to the lessee. We are anxious to get the land improved under conditions absolutely fair to the selector. It is not the custom to-day to protect the settler to any great extent. If it is done in some cases as a matter of grace, why should not it be done in all cases under statutory provision?

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): The Hon. member's proposition is an extraordinary one. If a person buys conditional purchase land, and fails to complete, according to the hon. member we should return all the money he has paid.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: No, the surplus.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): He is paid the surplus. Under the proposed new clause a man could hold land for years and, without incurring any loss, could claim the return of his money.

New clause put and negatived.

New clause—Relief against forfeiture in certain cases:

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I move—

That the following be added as a new clause:—"If any lease under Part V. or Part VI. of the principal Act is forfeited for default in payment of rent, the lessee may, within one month of the publication in the 'Government Gazette' of notice of the forfeiture, apply to a Resident Magistrate for relief on the ground that the lessee was unable to pay the rent by reason of a failure of his crop. The application shall be

heard by the Resident Magistrate after such notice to the Minister of the time appointed for the hearing as the Resident Magistrate may deem sufficient to afford the Minister an opportunity of showing cause against the application. If it is proved to the satisfaction of the Resident Magistrate that the lessee was unable to pay the rent by reason of the failure of his crop, he may give a certificate in writing to the applicant to that effect. On production by the lessee of such certificate, and on payment of the rent in arrear, the Governor shall waive the forfeiture and reinstate the lessee as of his former estate: Provided that if on such application the Resident Magistrate shall refuse to give a certificate he may order that the applicant shall pay to the Minister the reasonable costs of opposing the application, to be fixed by the Resident Magistrate, and such costs shall be payable by the applicant to the Minister accordingly: Provided also that no certificate shall be granted if an application for a conditional purchase lease or other holding of the forfeited land has been made and approved before notice of an application for relief under this section is served on the Minister."

Recently the Minister announced that he would forfeit land unless the rent was paid, as lessees could go to the Industries Assistance Board and borrow money with which to pay their rent. The proposed new clause provides that where there is a failure of crop, the Minister alone shall not decide whether relief shall be granted. I propose that the lessee should be able to apply to the Resident Magistrate.

New clause put and negatived.

New clause—Amendments of Sections 55 and 38:

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I move—

That the following be added as a new clause:—"Section fifty-five of the principal Act is amended by omitting the word 'one-twentieth' in paragraph (1) with a view of inserting the word 'one-thirtieth.' Section thirty-eight of the Land Act Amendment Act, 1906, is amended by omitting the word 'one-

twentieth' in paragraph (1) with a view of inserting the word 'one-thirtieth.' "

All leases should have a currency of 30 years instead of a mixed currency as proposed in the Bill.

New clause put and negatived.

New clause :

Hon. J. MITCHELL : I move—

That the following be added as a new clause :—" The Minister may after any lease has been in existence for five years, and the full improvements required by the Act have been performed, issue to the lessee a Crown grant on payment of the purchase money reserved on the lease less a rebate of four per cent per annum."

We have extended the leases to 30 years. That would mean that a man must wait 30 years to get a Crown grant, or pay up the full amount of the purchase money without the rebate under the law. I propose that if the lessee is willing to pay up, he shall do so and receive the rebate. That will be of advantage to the revenue of the State. I do not propose that we shall relieve people, who buy land, from the improvement conditions or from the need to reside where residence is part of the arrangement. Many people will prefer to have a Crown grant, and when they can afford to take it up they should be in a position to do so.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS : I recognise that there is some argument in the hon. member's contention and possibly some justification for the new clause. I will ask the Under Secretary of the department and the Crown law authorities to look into the matter and if we find it is necessary to insert the clause this will be done in another place.

Hon. J. MITCHELL : As the Minister has undertaken to consider the matter in this way I am prepared to withdraw the proposed new clause.

New clause by leave withdrawn.

New clause :

Mr. GRIFFITHS : I move—

That the following be added as a new clause :—" That the Minister be empowered to extend the term and exempt payment of rent for five years until such

time as a railway be constructed to those settlers outside the 12½ mile radius, who settled upon certain areas on the promise of a line being constructed."

It is the custom in the Eastern States to give such terms. In Queensland 10 years, in South Australia 10 years, and New South Wales 5 years are allowed. I have in mind four sections of the community in this State which should be assisted. The first section is in my own electorate between Kondinin and Merredin. There is another section in the Avon electorate along the Yorkra-kine-North Baandee railway route. There is also the Mt. Marshall-Lake Brown section and the Lake Grace section of settlers. The board appointed to inquire into the repricing of land recommended a general all-round exemption for five years. I am simply asking that the people I have referred to, who were placed on these areas on the distinct promise of a railway line, should be given exemption until such time as the promised lines are constructed.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS : Whilst I agree with much of what the hon. member has said I cannot, I regret, entertain his proposal for the reasons which I gave in connection with a proposal put forward earlier in the evening.

Hon. J. MITCHELL : The proposal contains a good deal to commend it to members. I understand the Minister proposes to introduce a more comprehensive Bill next session.

The Premier : He did not say that.

Hon. J. MITCHELL : The Premier made it clear that other amendments were needed. I hope that the proposal to exempt, to some extent, settlers who are outside the profitable carting distance, will be considered.

Mr. GRIFFITHS : Whilst I was speaking on this particular matter last evening, certain interjections were made which, after reading a copy of my speech, I consider are a distinct reflection on certain actions of mine. The Minister for Lands when interjecting whilst I was speaking in connection with a resolution which I had read—

The CHAIRMAN: Is the hon. member referring to a previous debate of this session?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I am referring to the subject which we are now discussing.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must deal with the amendment.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Then I am ruled out of order.

Mr. THOMSON: I regret that the Minister in charge of the Bill cannot see his way to fall in with the wishes of the member for York. When we were dealing with Clause 3 I had proposed to move an addition that all settlers should have a period of five years free of rent and free of land tax, but the clause was passed without my being able to do so. I hope the Minister will be able to deal with this matter when the measure goes before another place.

The Minister for Lands: We have already had a clause dealing with that matter.

Mr. THOMSON: We were told that this was not a party measure, but it would appear from the divisions that this is so. It seems to me a pity that the Government should adopt such an attitude.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must speak to the proposed new clause.

Mr. THOMSON: In my district there are settlers who have been promised a railway, and who have no chance of farming at a profit without that railway. Settlers at a distance from the railway system should receive consideration from the Government.

New clause put and negatived.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments, and the report adopted.

BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT AMENDMENT.

Council's Amendments.

Schedule of seven amendments requested by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Holman in the Chair; the Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill.

No. 1—Clause 2, after the word "and," in line two, insert "municipal and road board rates and licenses":

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: This amendment proposes to include the payment of municipal and roads board rates and licenses in Section 9 of the principal Act, making it compulsory for the Government to pay such rates and licenses out of the proceeds of a crop before the surplus is dealt with. I cannot accept the amendment, as it would be a breach of faith with the merchants and others, who understood these rates, and licenses would come under the Third Schedule of the Act. I move—

That the amendment be not made.

Mr. PIESSE: Are municipalities and roads boards debarred under the principal Act from suing for rates and licenses?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If they harassed settlers who have not money to pay, the Government would proclaim the Postponement of Debts Act and so prevent the taking of action.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not made.

No. 2—Clause 2, strike out the words "substituting the figures '1917' for '1916' in the proviso" and insert the words "striking out the proviso":

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The object of this amendment is to rectify an error in the principal Act, Section 9 of which limits the operation of the measure. The limitation should be made at the end of the Act. I move—

That the amendment be made.

Question passed; the Council's amendment made.

No. 3—Clause 3, after the word "or," in line two, insert the words "municipal and road board rates and licenses":

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: This amendment again refers to municipal and roads board rates and licenses. I move—

That the amendment be not made.

Question passed; the Council's amendment not made.

No. 4—Clause 5, strike out the two last lines and insert the following:—
 “creditors who participate in such distribution shall allow a discount of one and a quarter per centum off their claims, so far as the same are satisfied, and such discount may be applied by the Colonial Treasurer towards the cost of administering this Act”:

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There was a doubt as to whether the discount of $1\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. was to be borne by the farmer or by the merchant. This amendment makes it clear that the merchant must bear the charge. It is really a Government amendment. I move—

That the amendment be made.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I understand the Government now charge $2\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. on accounts paid by the Industries Assistance Board.

The Minister for Lands: That is discount for cash.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: That is done by regulation, and not under the Act?

The Minister for Lands: Yes.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I think the clause should apply to all payments by the Industries Assistance Board. As the clause now stands, the $1\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. will be deducted from suppliers who are paid by the Government. The $2\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. to which I have referred is charged against merchants and storekeepers, who in their turn charge it against the farmer.

The Minister for Works: There is always $2\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. discount.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Not in the case of country storekeepers, who cannot allow discount by reason of the increased railway freights. The charge should not be more than $1\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. in any case. Why have this clause at all, if the Minister can charge just what he pleases?

Mr. HARRISON: Do I understand that this means a reduction of $1\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. from machinery merchants and from others who participate in the arrangements made by the board?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is the position. An agreement was arrived at with the merchants, who said,

“If you do the business we will allow you $1\frac{1}{4}$ per cent.”

Question passed; the Council's amendment made.

No. 5—Clause 5, add a subclause to stand as Subclause 2 as follows:—
 Section twenty-one of the principal Act is further amended by added a paragraph as follows:—“If the Colonial Treasurer shall, in his discretion, think fit to give effect to this section by applying the surplus proceeds of the assigned crops in or towards the discharge of the other debts and obligations of the applicant, the applicant shall not nor shall any person claiming under him redeem, prior to the distribution of such surplus, the securities in the hands of the Colonial Treasurer, anything contained in this Act to the contrary notwithstanding”:

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Under the principal Act a settler who has had assistance from the board can pay off the Treasurer and then refuse to comply with the conditions of the measure as outlined in Section 21 and the third schedule. This proviso is inserted so that we may carry out the obligation of seeing that the surplus is distributed amongst the merchants as outlined in the schedule and as agreed to between the Government and the merchants. I move—

That the amendment be made.

Mr. HARRISON: A farmer may have had a certain amount advanced from the Industries Assistance Board and may have other liabilities, but it appears that the Government want more than will actually recoup them for their advance. Is it possible that, as soon as a man has delivered sufficient produce to meet the liabilities of the Government, plus all the other amounts, he is free then to use the balance?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I agree that the Minister is under a certain obligation to the creditors and as agreed he is to protect them and act as receiver for them. When we pass this clause the Minister will merely take what is owing to the Industries Assistance Board and, at the request of the other creditors, discharge the farmer. If the other

creditors, when the Minister's claim is satisfied, can obtain a release for the farmer, that is satisfactory.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: If he pays his full liability under paragraphs (a) and (b) of Section 9 and the interest as well, and then his other creditors say, "We are prepared to let him go," then we will not stand in the way.

MR. THOMSON: A man may have taken advantage of the Industries Assistance Board and he may be prepared to pay to the board the whole of the money they advanced him to pay his rent, his interest to the Agricultural Bank, stores, etc., but if he is owing past debts, such as machinery, according to this clause he cannot go free.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Not unless the other creditors agree.

MR. THOMSON: What will happen if one creditor objects?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: The matter is left to the discretion of the Treasurer if one man tries to victimise the farmer. We will not then stand in the way.

MR. THOMSON: If a farmer has satisfied the Industries Assistance Board will the Government allow him to sell his crop and do what he likes with it? The reason I ask is that one of my constituents offered to pay to the board the whole of his liabilities right up to date but he has not been able to get a reply. Such a man should have the opportunity of going free. If he has not, he is, to all intents and purposes, a bond slave, because he will have to do as the board tells him. If he wants to buy machinery he must have the approval of the board. If a private individual is prepared to hand over to the board the whole of the money he owes, then the Government are not running any risk, and the other creditors are not in any worse position. What I am afraid of is that the other creditors will not give him the opportunity of getting free.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: A settler can exercise his own discretion in regard to the marketing of his crop, provided that the board is satisfied that he is not interfering with the asset of the board which, of course, is his crop. We simply say to the settler, "You can

make your own arrangement, but that arrangement is subject to our endorsement." The settler might sell his crop at a price which is below the market rate. That is not likely, but it is possible, and the board would lose in consequence. With that restriction we try to allow the farmer to carry on his own business. In regard to the clause, we could never have gone into this matter of helping the farmer to market his crop if we had not made arrangements with the machinery merchants and given a guarantee that their machinery would not be removed from the farm. We said, "We will advance for this year's crop, and shall have the first call on the crop for what we have advanced, and afterwards the surplus shall be distributed." We discussed the third schedule with the Chamber of Commerce. When we were dealing with the repayment, we put in a provision—I think it was a mistake—that if the settler paid that which we had advanced he could get a clearance. By this the Government were protecting themselves, but not carrying out their obligations to the Chamber of Commerce. Immediately I noticed it I requested the Crown Solicitor to draft an amendment which would protect the others who had assisted in producing this year's crop.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Was the amendment passed?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, we had it inserted in another place. This is it now before the Committee. Once we get back from the settler the amount we have advanced, and we have distributed the surplus, that settler is finished with us. But he cannot get clear until the surplus is distributed. Once he has paid off what we have advanced we distribute his surplus, and he is finished with us.

MR. THOMSON: Then I understand the position is that at present the Industries Assistance Board cannot release a farmer, even if he offers the whole of the money they have advanced to him; but, if after he has taken off his harvest he offers to pay and he has a surplus of, say £5, that will be distributed among his creditors and he will be free of the board.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, he will be clear.

Mr. HARRISON: The Minister now states that the Board will distribute the whole of the surplus. I understood before from the Minister that if the farmer fulfilled his obligations to the board and met his just debts under the third schedule he would be free to administer his surplus himself.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, once the provisions of the third schedule are complied with, the surplus is his own.

Mr. HARRISON: Suppose a debtor to the board met his obligation to the board and cleared the debts applying to the schedule; there might be an old creditor willing to pay and clear and, further, there might be other old creditors. Would they get any advantage?

The Minister for Lands: They all stand in. That would come under paragraph 8 of third schedule.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I thought creditors were protected, but apparently they are only preferential creditors in regard to this one crop.

The Minister for Works: The Act is only for one year.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Can the man who owes money to the Industries Assistance Board negotiate the sale of his produce? I understand the board has refused to confirm sales of wheat made by farmers.

The Minister for Lands: Then the price could not have been satisfactory.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am told in that some cases it was up to 4s. 6d.

The Minister for Lands: We have been looking for sales of that description.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The board should not refuse to confirm any sales sufficient to cover their advance, whatever the price may be.

The Minister for Lands: But they have to protect the other creditors.

Question passed: the Council's amendment made.

No. 6—Clause 8, add the following words:—"and by adding to paragraph 7 the words:—'Without limiting the meaning of the words "debts incurred in the working expenses of planting and harvesting the crop in the 1914-15

season," such working expenses shall include: seed, fertilisers, wages, jutes, twines, oils, horse-feed, and stores: '"

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: This is the question the member for Northam raised in regard to the inclusion of distribution under paragraph 7 of the third schedule for stores advanced for the planting and harvesting of last year's crop. The board has pointed out to me that there are great difficulties in regard to the administration of this provision, that it is very difficult to limit the storekeeper to the planting and harvesting of last year's crop. In many cases there are big arrears, running over some years, and it is difficult to separate what was spent on last year's harvest. To be fair to other creditors we have to see that they only get in whatever was spent on last year's harvest. I am sincerely sympathetic with the storekeepers, and I have tried to argue their case with the board, but I have always been met with strong objection. However, having gone into it thoroughly the board now say that despite all difficulties they will try to comply with the request made by another place and allow the storekeeper payment for what he advanced for harvesting last year, and at the same time do justice to the other creditors.

Hon. J. Mitchell: But it is a breach of faith to drop out the 1913-14 crop as has been done. The amendment should include both 1913-14 and 1914-15.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: This will make it clear that the paragraph applies to the 1914-15 season.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It would be wrong to omit the 1913-14 season.

The Minister for Lands: The inclusion of that season was a mistake made in another place.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: No, it was not. In the 1913-14 season, the farmers were carried on by the storekeepers.

The Minister for Lands: We are going back only one year—to 1914-15.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It would be a breach of faith with the storekeepers to alter the schedule from 1913-14 to 1914-15. In the former year, the farmers

lost their crops and were carried on by the storekeepers.

The Minister for Lands : The crop of 1914-15 was a failure.

Hon. J. MITCHELL : That is according to the statistician's and not the storekeepers' year. There is no reason why the storekeepers' who supplied the farmers during the year the crop was a failure, that is to the end of last year, should not be protected. The Minister would like to escape payment to these people. I oppose the amendment.

Mr. THOMSON : I do not agree with the member for Northam. When the Bill was being discussed I was under the impression that we were to provide stores to carry the settler through the last season and until the 1915-16 harvest. The Industries Assistance Board should deal sympathetically with the settlers in the matter of stores. If a farmer has authority from the board to get £10 worth of stores a month, he must take the full quantity whether he requires it or not. One month he might require only £8 worth and the next £12 worth, but if he foregoes £2 worth one month, he is not permitted to take the extra quantity in the next month. A little common sense should be exercised in these matters.

The Minister for Lands : I have told the board to be as liberal as they can in these matters.

Question passed ; the Council's amendment made.

No. 7—New clause, add the following clause :—"No commodity shall be supplied or money advanced under the principal Act or this Act after the 31st day of March, 1917" :

The MINISTER FOR LANDS : I move—

That the amendment be made.

Question passed ; the Council's amendment made.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

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

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1915-16.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 19th October, Mr. Holman in the Chair.

Public Works Department : (Hon. W. C. Angwin, Minister) :

Vote—*Public Works and Buildings, £93,102 :*

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. C. Angwin—North-East Fremantle) [10.45] : In introducing the Estimates of this department, I only want as briefly as possible, to show what the position has been in the Works Department for the last year. The total expenditure for the year has been £1,475,073. This has been made up, from Loan fund, £730,506, revenue, works and buildings, £132,780, trading concerns, £568,436, and property trust £43,351, or a grand total of £1,475,073. During the discussion on the Estimates, while they have been under review by the Committee this session, a good deal has been said on the question of economy in the departments. I want to point out that in the Public Works Department, the total expenditure on salaries for the past year was £46,384, or £23,225 less than it was for the year 1911-12. It is a fact of course that the Water Supply Department was at that time administered by the Public Works Department. Since then there have been brought into existence the brick works, the implements works, and the quarries, the salaries and administration of which are included in the amount I have given. For the information of hon. members, I have had prepared a return showing the percentage of salaries to expenditure during the past ten years, in order to demonstrate that during the past year the administration charges for the Public Works Department have been decreased. In the year 1905-6 the expenditure on works and buildings was £529,208, the total salaries for the year amounted to £49,135, and the percentage of salaries to expenditure was 9.28. For the year 1906-7 the expenditure was £681,979, the salaries paid amounted to £53,278, and the percentage of salaries to ex-

penditure was 7.81. For the year 1907-8 the expenditure was £676,975 the salaries amounted to £54,383, and the percentage of salaries to expenditure was 8.03. For the year 1908-9 the expenditure was £780,727, the total salaries amounted to £51,035, and the percentage of salaries to expenditure was 6.53. For the year 1909-10 the expenditure was £782,407, the salaries paid amounted to £50,906, and the percentage of salaries to expenditure was 6.50. For the year 1910-11 the expenditure was £1,150,149 the salaries paid amounted to £55,999, and the percentage of salaries to expenditure was 4.87. For the year 1911-12 the expenditure was £1,481,931, the salaries amounted to £69,810, and the percentage of salaries to expenditure was 4.70. For the year 1912-13 the expenditure was £1,421,990, the salaries paid amounted to £57,697, and the percentage of salaries to expenditure was 4.057. For the year 1913-14 the expenditure was £1,091,692, the salaries paid amounted to £48,763, and the percentage of salaries to expenditure was 4.466. I may explain that in this year, 1913-14, the State Sawmills were started; but the sawmill salaries are not included in the figures I have given. For 1914-15 expenditure was £1,016,696 and salaries, again excluding sawmill salaries, were £46,384, or a percentage of 4.563. In the case of the State Sawmills, for 1913-14 the expenditure amounted to £84,678 and salaries to £743, the percentage being .877; while the corresponding amounts for 1914-15 are £410,068 and £1,925, the percentage working out at .469. The figures I have quoted show that there is little ground for complaint as regard the administration cost of the Works Department. During last year the department have done and during the current year they are doing a considerable amount of work for the Commonwealth; and we anticipate receiving from Commonwealth departments during this year approximately £7,500 towards our expenditure on salaries and incidentals. As hon. members are aware, the Works Department

are carrying out work connected with the Perth General Post Office and have also in hand a number of buildings for the Defence Department. If payments in this connection from the Commonwealth are credited, a further substantial reduction in the Works Department's percentage of salaries to expenditure will be shown. The principal items of expenditure from revenue during the past year were: roads and bridges (including subsidies at the decreased rate) £37,239, harbours and rivers £21,222, additions and repairs to public buildings £16,798, hospitals and quarantine stations £4,796, and school buildings £14,396. Expenditure under the head of trading concerns was as follows:—Brickworks £2,754, implement works £142,300, quarries £11,389, and sawmills £411,993. The principal items of expenditure from the property trust account were: bridges £3,193, school buildings £28,698, and sewerage connections to public buildings £8,396. It will thus be seen that, taking all these items into consideration, the Works Department's expenditure has been fairly heavy and that a good deal of work has been carried out by the departmental officers during the past year. The revenue collected by the department during 1914-15 totalled £408,957 14s. 1d., under the following heads: traffic receipts from railways under construction £6,336 11s. 7d., hire of plant £186 19s., rents (exclusive of lands) £8,876 11s. 4d., reimbursements in aid generally £5,140 12s. 8d., reimbursements in aid for use of motor cars £290 3s. 5d., State Implement Works £73,713 3s. 5d., State Quarries £10,305 19s. 5d., State Brickworks £990 13s. 3d., and State Sawmills £303,117. The total of £408,957 represents a large increase on last year's total revenue, which was £154,445. Since the 30th June, 1914, 364 miles of railway have been completed and added to the railway system, making a total mileage of 3,331½. The railways completed during the year are: Wongan Hills-Mullewa 198 miles, Wickel-pin-Meredin (Corrigin section) 37 miles, Brookton-Kunjin 56 miles, and Yillimining-Kondinin 73 miles; a total of

364 miles. The lines of railway now under construction are: Wyalcatchem-Mount Marshall, Newcastle-Bolgart extension, Wagin-Bowelling, Kukerin-Lake Grace, and Esperance northwards. Rails have been laid and traffic is being carried on the Wyalcatchem-Mount Marshall line for a distance of 28 miles, and on the Wagin-Bowelling line for 19 miles. In connection with harbour works good headway has been made. The first section of the Fremantle harbour will be completed in a few weeks. I wish to mention at this point that the whole of the wharves at Fremantle are now completed, the last pile having been driven, and that no further wharf extension can be made at Fremantle until alterations are made as regards railways and bridges. The dredging of the Fremantle harbour from a depth of 33 feet to one of 36 feet is now in hand. The increased depth is urgently needed in view of the larger vessels now trading to the port. The Albany jetty is well advanced, and we anticipate that by the end of the current financial year the first section, which is now in hand, will be completed. As hon. members have previously been informed, it is intended to make the Albany jetty much wider eventually than it is being constructed at present, and also to provide shed accommodation and so forth. Further extensions will be made when funds are available. The extension of the Bunbury breakwater has been begun, and we intend to push on with the work. Hon. members will have noticed in yesterday's newspapers a report of a heavy blast in the Roelands quarry, which proved very successful and will effect a decrease in the cost of quarrying for the Bunbury breakwater. As regards Geraldton harbour, preliminary investigations have been made and quarries located for harbour extension work; and, as I informed the member for Geraldton a few weeks ago, it is my intention to visit that port with the Engineer-in-Chief as soon as the session closes, with a view of ascertaining what scheme is best for the port, where increased accommodation is urgently needed. Hon. members will realise that our greatest

difficulty at Geraldton is increased depth. In view of the large area under crop in the districts of which Geraldton is the natural port, it is essential that steps should be taken as soon as possible to improve the harbour facilities. During the past year 31 school buildings and quarters have been erected, as well as 41 pavilion class rooms for open air teaching; while additions have been carried out to 18 other schools and at the end of the financial year six new schools were under construction. Hon. members will see from these figures that the Government have not neglected the provision of school accommodation. The Wooroloo Sanatorium which has been in course of construction for some time is now nearing completion and we hope that a great number of sufferers will benefit by its erection. Turning to the Estimates for the present financial year it will be found that the amount provided for works and buildings, including salaries and contingencies, is £93,102, a decrease of £39,678 as compared with last year's expenditure. The salaries total £7,000; rents, insurance, incidentals, etc., £6,475; roads and bridges, including subsidies to boards and municipalities on the same basis as last year, £36,300; harbours and rivers, £8,770; public buildings £25,883; hospitals, etc., £3,130. We found it necessary, owing to our financial position to construct a number of buildings last year from the Property Trust Estimates and the amount provided this year is £89,018. The principal items on which it is proposed to expend this money are roads and bridges, £6,108; harbours and rivers, £21,600; sewerage connections (public buildings) £17,000; hospitals, etc., £10,160; police stations, £3,755; school buildings, £23,147. I might add for the information of hon. members that the only regret I have had since I have held office of Minister for Works is on account of my inability to comply with the many requests which have come to the department from various parts of the State. I have said "No" so often to hon. members during the past 12 months that now they have arrived at the conclusion that it is useless to ap-

proach me, and no deputations call on me now because it is realised that I have no money at my disposal to enable me to grant requests. My refusal to accede to the many requests which have been made to me from various parts of the State have been due solely to the cause I have mentioned. I would have been only too pleased to be in the position to carry out many important works. It has been due solely to lack of funds that I have not been able to maintain the popularity of the Public Works department, a popularity which it has enjoyed for many years past. I am hoping however, that times will improve and that before long it will be possible to satisfy the demands of the people in the State, and that we shall be able to show the same energy as we have always displayed in the past.

Mr. Heitmann: Who is responsible for the concrete work at the Sanatorium?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member can ask that question on the Loan Estimates. In submitting my Estimates to the Committee I shall conclude by saying that we have endeavoured to keep down expenses as far as possible, and that my only regret is that the Estimates do not include many more items for the purpose of meeting the requirements of the State.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.7 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 26th October, 1915.

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: 1, Abattoirs Act, 1900, regulations. 2, Stock Diseases Act, 1895, regulations. 3, Municipal Corporations Act, 1906, by-laws for the regulation of motor and other traffic.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

- 1, Roads Act Amendment and Continuation.
- 2, Cottesloe Beach Rates Validation.
- 3, Postponement of Debts Act Continuance.
- 4, Marriage Act Amendment.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE, MONEY BILLS PROCEDURE.

Hon. W. Kingsmill brought up the report of the Joint Select Committee on money bills procedure.

Report received, read and ordered to be printed.

MOTION—VENEREAL DISEASES, UNIFORM LEGISLATION.

Hon. J. DUFFELL (Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.42]: I move—

That, in the opinion of this House, it is desirable that the Government