

ceived it would make its own communication to the State Government concerned. If it became our duty to fight out any matter involving special treatment towards those who were outside our State and were coming into it, or who were in it and subjects of any Government outside the State, we would have, except we occupied the position of absolutely refusing to be bound by the Commonwealth, to ask the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth to make our protest, and to seek through him that reform we thought necessary. The Leader of the Opposition would not wish that we should take from the Commonwealth a power that as long as we remained an inherent part of the Commonwealth must be the Commonwealth's. What had been done was to furnish the Commonwealth Government with the facts within our power dealing on matter of this kind, and to urge on the Commonwealth most careful consideration of the special circumstances of our State; but beyond that, and until the Commonwealth had so failed in its duty that we could say that although it was the paramount power it was wanting in its duty in protecting this State, and we were determined not to recognise its authority, until that stage arrived, it was useless on our part to work individually as a State and deal with external affairs. That was why he (the Attorney General) had pointed out to the member for Mt. Margaret that this particular communication received by the Governor General was not received by any State Governor, but by the Governor General and Mr. Deakin from the home authorities.

MR. BATH: Had not the despatch in regard to See Wah come direct from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Governor of this State?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The only despatch he (the Attorney General) knew of was the one dealt with by Mr. Deakin.

MR. HOLMAN: There was the despatch sent home by Mr. Le Mesurier.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: We were entering on grounds which we might debate for months. Until the position he had pointed out arrived we were not justified in going farther. We would first need to express want of confidence in the Commonwealth's conduct of external affairs.

MR. HOLMAN: Then progress should be reported, and members should have an opportunity of looking into the matter.

THE PREMIER: There was very much in the contention of the member for Kanowna. It placed great powers in the hands of the Minister for Lands; but the amendment was suggested with the object of giving, in such cases as he had referred to, the right to decline applications. He was willing to give the Leader of the Opposition the assurance that if the clause were allowed to pass, on re-committal he would be prepared to consider its amendment.

Clause put and passed.

Progress reported and leave given to sit again.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 9.47 o'clock, until the next Tuesday.

#### Legislative Council, Tuesday, 25th September, 1906.

	PAGE
Report: Bubonic Plague Inquiry, Geraldton	1783
Bill: Land Tax Assessment, 2a. resumed, adjourned	1783
Motion: School Fees Regulations, to disapprove of charges, debate concluded...	1802

THE PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 o'clock p.m.

#### PRAYERS.

#### PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the COLONIAL SECRETARY: 1, Central Board of Health Annual Report for year ending 30th June, 1906. 2, Report by the Comptroller General of Prisons for the year 1905. 3, Roads Act, 1902: (a.) By-laws of the Fremantle Road Board; (b.) By-laws of the Meckering Road Board.

# REPORT—BUBONIC PLAGUE INQUIRY, GERALDTON.

HON. J. M. DREW brought up the report of the select committee of inquiry into the outbreak of bubonic plague at Geraldton, and the alleged inattention of officers of the Health Department in Perth.

Report received, read, and ordered to be printed.

## BILL—LAND TAX ASSESSMENT.

### MACHINERY MEASURE.

#### SECOND READING.

Debate resumed from the 18th September.

HON. E. McLARTY (South-West): I moved the adjournment of the debate with a view of having more time to consider the measure, which I think is of great importance. I fully recognise the responsibility that rests on me and on every member of the House in dealing with a Bill imposing fresh taxation on the people—not on the whole, but on a very small section of the people. The Colonial Secretary in explaining the Bill asked for it fair consideration, and that I am sure is the wish and intention of every member of the House that it shall receive. He also asked some very pertinent questions. One was Was the tax necessary for revenue purposes, and if so, was it the most equitable tax that could be devised? I think a farther question might have been asked, Are we doing the best that can be done with the revenue already received? It seems to me, with a population approximately of a quarter of a million of people and a revenue of three and a-half millions there must be something radically wrong when we are going to the bad year after year. Last year we were some £70,000 behind, and this year it appears we want something approaching a quarter of a million to make up the deficiency.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: That includes the two deficits.

HON. E. McLARTY: I intend to deal briefly with the view of the case as it affects people on the land. At the present time it is no new thing to have a land tax. We have local bodies with authority to tax up to 2½d. in the pound, and in some instances I believe that is

being done. I myself pay 2d. in the pound in one district, and I think it is more than people on the land can bear to have another 1½d. in the pound put on top of that, making the tax 3½d. in the pound. At the present time it is admitted roads boards are pretty reasonable in their valuations, which are made in most instances by practical men who wish to deal as liberally as possible with the settlers. Under this Bill it strikes me the Government will appoint some valuers who will go into the country, as I have known valuers to do in the past when employed by roads boards, with most extravagant ideas of the value of properties, and they will place a valuation on the land which it is not worth, and which it is impossible to get interest out of if this is done. If the Government place a high valuation on the land, roads boards will bring their valuations up to the same level as the State valuation, and the tax will become altogether unbearable. I think the time is most inopportune to bring in a Land Tax Bill. I do not know that it could be brought in at a worse time, for in a few days our ports will be thrown open to the whole of the Commonwealth. What will be the result? I am informed on the best authority that at the present time there are thousands of bags of oats and produce of all kinds waiting to be shipped to this State as soon as the duty is taken off next month. That is going to be the result. It is no good anyone saying that the State is self-supporting, that we are producing as much as we require, and to argue that the sea freights are sufficient protection to the producers in this State. They are no protection at all. The man within 60 miles of Perth or Fremantle, who has to rail his produce to those centres, is about on an equal footing with the producer in South Australia. The sea freight to Fremantle at the present time and the railage from Northam to Perth or Fremantle is just about the same amount. If a man is more than 60 miles from the centres of population he is handicapped because he is unable to get his produce to market as cheaply as it can be brought by sea from Adelaide. As far as I am able to judge, I think there are hard times ahead of those who are endeavouring to make a living

on the land, and the times will be hard for the next ten years. We have had 60,000 bags of chaff landed during the past month or two at Fremantle from the other States, and this notwithstanding that there is at present a slight duty on imported chaff. When that comes off, as it will soon, I venture to say that those producers living within 60 miles of Perth or Fremantle will not be able to sell their produce at anything like remunerative rates. We know what the result of the gradual decrease of the import duties has been in the past. Take the vine-growing industry; this State is lauded as a fine place and well-suited to the growth of vines, as no doubt it is; but what is the value of that industry to-day? I have paid a man 8s. a day for working in my vineyard, which has cost me a great deal of money; and while I was paying him I thought it would be better for me to grub up the vines and utilise the land for depasturing sheep. One cannot get as much for grapes during the greater part of the season as it costs to box and send them to the market; and as to making wine—

MEMBER: That industry is only just starting here.

HON. E. McLARTY: Then I am sorry for the people who will have to carry it on. A good number of casks of wine are made in this State, and the experience of most of those who have gone in for the industry has been that they have had almost to give the wine away. A neighbour of mine experienced in this industry has for many years been selling his vintage for 1s. 3d. per gallon. Does any hon. member assert that it pays to grow grapes, manufacture wine and keep it in the cellar for months, to sell it at 1s. 3d. a gallon? The same conditions may be said to apply to almost every other class of product; even to meat, now that frozen meat is getting such a tremendous hold in this market. Perhaps members are unaware of the enormous quantities of frozen meat imported here and used throughout the State. I therefore think that this is a most inopportune time to place any farther burden on people who are settled or settling on the land. We know it is very expensive in most parts of the State to bring land under cultivation; it is a matter of years. No doubt members will

say there is a land tax in other States. I am aware of that. I have been through the greater part of the Eastern States and have compared what I saw there with what I have known here; and I say there is no comparison at all. In Victoria for instance I saw hundreds of milking cows grazing on as many hundreds of acres as you would require thousands of acres to graze the same number of cows here. I do not want to run this State down; it has treated me well, and I believe there is a great deal of good in it; but I certainly must voice my opinion that those who are at present endeavouring to develop the land and make a living on it are not able to bear any farther burdens. I saw a report of a deputation to the Premier on the subject of the unemployed in Perth, one speaker saying he knew of one family which for over a week had not had a particle of meat in the house. That certainly was a hard case; but I can tell him there are scores of families living on the land who scarcely ever see a piece of meat, and I do not know when they will. It has been said this land tax will fall on a portion of the community who are well able to bear it and can afford to pay it. No greater mistake could be made than to suppose that the farming community is necessarily prosperous. I know there is just as much hardship in country districts as in other parts of the State.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: But the tax does not touch the small holder.

HON. E. McLARTY: I am aware of that; but it will touch many farmers who are in almost as straitened circumstances as some people in the towns. I cannot see how their position is going to improve, for the reasons I have already given, namely that they have now to face the unrestricted competition of all the other States. I am speaking what I know to be facts. There is no use painting matters in false colours and making them out to be other than they are. Settlers in country districts have to pay rates to the roads boards, and I can tell members that great difficulty is sometimes experienced in collecting those rates, for many people willing to pay the rates have not the means, for they find it almost impossible to raise the necessary money. If a man uses a vehicle on his land he is taxed for every wheel; he has

also to pay his land rents, and altogether the settler is taxed to such extent already that I cannot see how these people are going to bear any farther impost. I will endeavour to keep my mind open on the question, and consider it fairly, and I do not want to be led away by considerations of a personal nature. If the Bill does pass into law, so far as I am concerned I can bear it; but I am looking at the matter from a broad point of view, and I hold that to impose such a tax as this at the present time is not justifiable. I have before me the report of the Public Service Commissioner, which I have not had time to go thoroughly into, but I notice that the report contains many interesting subjects. For instance, the Commissioner refers to the huge sums of money which are voted every year for the heads of departments to expend, and he suggests that a 10 per cent. reduction on the whole of these amounts would yield a saving of about £260,000 a year. I cannot help thinking that it would have been possible for the Government to have brought about a great saving in that direction.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Ten per cent. on what?

HON. E. McLARTY: On all these sums of money.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: What sums?

HON. E. McLARTY: Law, police, gaols, magistrates, £223,550; education, £161,000; charities, health, etc., £138,000; works and railways, £1,236,750—on all these items. I have not the least doubt that a considerable reduction could be made in some of these amounts without impairing the efficiency of the service.

SIR E. H. WITTENOOM: The Government proposes to effect a saving of £200,000 a year by economy in administration.

HON. E. McLARTY: If the Government can reduce the cost of administration by £200,000 at one stroke, it shows there must be a large leakage somewhere, and that it is time the financial position of the State was looked into. We are told also that while this land tax is to be placed upon us, the roads boards grants and the municipal grants are to be reduced. So altogether we have not a very pleasing prospect before us. There

are men in the country districts who would not shrink from paying their share of necessary taxation, for they recognise that the work of government must go on; but having looked into the matter closely, they are utterly opposed to this land tax. In most of the districts which I represent, public meetings have been held and protests voiced against this tax. Not long since we passed a Bill for the imposition of a dividend duty, and that duty has increased the revenue by about £130,000 a year; but I contend that this duty, though fair in itself, is most unfair in its application, because while one company which happens to be incorporated has to pay 5 per cent. dividend duty, yet another company trading in the same way but not incorporated escapes the duty entirely. Surely that is not a fair way of doing things. If one company was compelled to pay 5 per cent. out of its profits, why should not other trading companies pay the same?

HON. M. L. MOSS: Would you prefer an income tax?

HON. E. McLARTY: I would sooner have an income tax than a land tax; and I would be prepared to pay it because I think it would be more equitable, and would fall on a class of the community which is able to bear it.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: But those whom you are endeavouring to assist would have to pay more under an income tax.

HON. E. McLARTY: Perhaps they would; but that does not affect the question of equity in the form of taxation. I think it would be a fairer tax all round than a land tax. The dividend duty needs altering. I have felt strongly on this question as a pastoralist who was brought under the operation of this tax while other squatters better able to pay than was our company were totally exempt. Some alteration should be made so that all trading concerns in the State should be brought under the duty, and if this were done it would bring in an enormous increase of revenue. Under present conditions, scarcely half the people pay the tax who ought to pay it. This Land Tax Bill contains a provision that absentee landowners shall be penalised to the extent of 50 per cent.

above those resident in the State. If there is any justice in that proposal, then a similar provision should apply in the case of the dividend duty, so that companies drawing profits from industries in this State should pay a higher duty tax than those in the State who spend their earnings here in assisting to develop the country.

HON. M. L. MOSS: So they do. Companies which operate only within the State are not liable to the dividend duty.

HON. E. McLARTY: I was not aware that it was so; but it occurred to me that it would be only fair it should be so. If it is fair that the absentee landowner should pay an increased tax, then I think it is equally fair that the absentee dividend-drawers outside the State should also pay a higher tax. We find in the report of the Public Service Commissioner that large sums of money are voted by Parliament every year for the development of mining and the development of agriculture; and these sums are practically entrusted to the head of the particular department to spend them as he pleases. I do not say the money is not properly spent; but still it is a great power to give. We give over £100,000 to a Minister for the development of agriculture, or for the development of mining, to be expended in any way the Minister may think fit. If times are hard, surely such sums as this might be cut down. We could do with less for the development of these industries. Years ago we had to do without these large sums, and I feel certain that no great harm would be done if they were reduced considerably at the present time. It is difficult to account for this sudden falling off, not exactly in the revenue, but in the sum necessary to meet the expenditure. We find that the largest works the State has undertaken are paying. For instance, the railways, in which we have spent two-thirds of the whole of our borrowed capital, are paying interest and sinking fund, and contribute a good sum to the revenue; and we have had most satisfactory reports of the Fremantle harbour works. The only large public undertaking that is not paying at the present time appears to be the Goldfields Water Scheme, and I think that perhaps the Government have been too easy in this regard. They have given way to

pressure and reduced the price of water more than they are justified in doing.

HON. J. T. GLOWREY: That is where the Government make a mistake, charging too much.

HON. E. McLARTY: I think the people who have the benefit of the water may reasonably be expected to pay a fair amount. It appears we are losing £70,000 a year by the scheme. That should be looked into. We should either utilise the water at present running away into the sea, or do something to make the scheme pay its own way. We have the huge sum of £850,000 paid in salaries in the Railway Department. Of course it is a big department, but I am satisfied there are a good many drones in that department who might well be dispensed with without their services being in any way missed. I have the greatest confidence in the Commissioner of Railways, and I hope he will look into this question and see if this amount cannot be reduced by a considerable sum. We have also £230,000 spent in the Colonial Secretary's Department. That seems a large sum. I believe that if this matter were taken in hand and in a thoroughly business-like manner, the Government could reduce their expenditure by thousands of pounds, by scores of thousands, and that the three and a-half millions we are getting through without knowing scarcely how, should be sufficient to meet the requirements of the State with something to spare. I feel a great deal of diffidence in opposing this land tax if the Government are in straightened circumstances. I have sympathy with the present Government, because it is not their bringing about. They are a new Government and deserve consideration. It is not an easy matter for a Government taking up the reins of office to straight away make sweeping reductions. It will, however, need to be done; there is no question about that; the situation must be faced; because we cannot go on year after year imposing one tax after another or the country will not be worth living in. The man who owns a little bit of property is looked upon as a robber; there is no room for thrift or economy; the owner of a little piece of land is looked upon as one the Government can fleece. They come at him in every way, and keep on and on until the man does not know

what he has left. If I may be pardoned for digressing a moment, the Government are like the Irishman who stole his neighbour's hay. He was taking the hay little by little, until there was very little left, and he confessed to his priest that he was stealing his neighbour's hay, and the priest asked him how much he was stealing. The Irishman said, "Well, your reverence, I will confess to the whole stack, because what is left I am going to take away to-night." I think that is very much the attitude of the Government. They take a little now and a little again, and by and by they will take the lot. I think some means could be devised instead of this tax. I cannot conscientiously bring myself to support this measure; not that I cannot pay the tax; I can pay it, and I would support an income tax under which perhaps I would have to pay a great deal more; but there are few people who labour harder or work like the people on the land. They are greatly handicapped in every way. We hear a great deal about the unemployed.

**THE COLONIAL SECRETARY:** But the towns will contribute two-thirds of this tax.

**HON. E. McLARTY:** I know all about that, but it is no inducement to me. The town-property holders should not be penalised if the tax is not necessary. It is not all beer and skittles owning property in a town. It is not only the rates and taxes one pays in the towns, but there is the inspector of the board of health coming round telling one to pull this down, and another inspector coming around telling one to build it up again. Many people often wish they had no property in the town; it is very vexatious and annoying, and it is not all profit. If the Government put their heads together, they could do without imposing this tax. As I was saying, the people on the land are handicapped in every possible way. I have heard a great deal lately about the unemployed and the difficulty of getting work. I do not think there is a place on the earth where, in proportion to the population, there is such a lot of worthless and idle men as in Western Australia. [**HON. J. T. GLOWREY:** There are some of the finest workmen in the world here.] They come to my house almost daily, some-

times two or three times a day. I know there are plenty of good honest workmen seeking for labour and trying to get it, who would do honest work if they could get it, but I say there are hundreds of men in the State now who will not work. They come to your door and beg for food, but if you give them employment they take every opportunity of robbing you and of treating you badly in return. The unemployed question is one that I can assure members is not so bad as it is represented to be. We have hundreds of men walking about the roads who would not take off their coats to do a day's work, even if they got double what they are worth. I have had experience of that, and the more experience I have the less sympathy I feel for this class of unemployed. I know there are many cases of men who have difficulty in getting work. We are told there are tradesmen out of employment in the towns, but I know that in my district the other day a carpenter out of work was offered some rough work that any man could do, and the reply came from the carpenter, "Yes; he would go out. He wanted his railway fare paid to the place and 1s. 6d. an hour, and he would put in 10 hours a day while he was there." This man would put in ten hours. How much work he would do I do not know, but it would amount to 15s. a day. If a man out of employment asks for 15s. a day, there cannot be very great scarcity of work. I do not know that I can say much more on this question at the present time. It is my intention, when the Bill goes into Committee, to move at the proper times that the amounts of  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. and  $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £ be reduced to  $\frac{1}{4}$ d. and 1d. in the £. I shall not oppose the second reading, but the measure has no favour in my eyes, because it will be bad for the State. It is a bad advertisement. We have been advertising our liberal land laws and the fact that the State is free from land tax. I believe the land tax will do a lot of harm.

**HON. R. F. SHOLL:** Then why vote for the second reading?

**HON. E. McLARTY:** I do not wish to go so far as to oppose the second reading, but I am not going to support the Bill in its present form at any rate. I want to hear arguments. I want to

hear what the Government have to say in favour of the Bill. I am not aware at present of anything in its favour, but I am going to keep my mind open. I can certainly see nothing to lead me to believe that the measure is in the best interests of the State, or that it is in the best interests of the State to impose a tax of this kind on land. We hear a great deal about the large estates which will be burst up by this tax, but there is a great deal more made out of this than is necessary or justifiable. There are few large estates here comparatively speaking, and some of those are owned by absentees who would be very glad indeed to sell them. In fact, the land is now in the market; anyone can buy it; if the Government want it they can get it for a song; but some of it is so poor that people will not settle on it. Therefore it is hard to impose a tax on this class of land. I know a good deal about this class of country, and I know that it can be bought at a very reasonable price. It is not fetching the owner anything like interest; in fact, a great deal of it is not bringing in a penny piece. Therefore it is very hard to penalise people who invested their money in the early days and hold land and cannot sell it. If there is good land not utilised and the people will not sell, I have no sympathy with the owners. I quite agree with the action of the Government in making people improve their holdings. I believe that in the early days we were all treated too liberally in taking up land under conditional purchase, and not carrying out the conditions prescribed. I entirely agree that any man taking up land under improvement conditions should be compelled to carry them out.

**THE HONORARY MINISTER:** Not one per cent. of the people in my district are not carrying out their improvements.

**HON. E. McLARTY:** No doubt now a move has been made to enforce improvements.

**THE HONORARY MINISTER:** The conditions are too easy.

**HON. E. McLARTY:** The conditions are easy and the people should be made to carry them out. I am no advocate of people monopolising land and not utilising it and preventing other people from going on it, but I know that a great deal of the country held unimproved is not

held for speculative purposes, but because the owners cannot realise on it. They would be glad to do so if opportunity offered. I do not believe this tax will have the effect some people think it will have of bursting up large estates. If a man has an estate worth holding he will pay the tax, if this measure becomes law, rather than part with the land; but the tax will press heavily on the honest people working and improving country, and putting into the land every shilling they can earn. They have to pay the roads board rates, the wheel tax, and the dog license, and we ask them to put their hands in their pockets a fourth time to contribute an additional sum to the Treasury. In what other part of this country do people work so hard and have so little enjoyment as people on the land? It is not a matter of eight hours a day: a farmer has to work from early morning until late at night. Take the case of my family: they have to be up at 5 o'clock in the morning, 40 cows to milk; and again in the evening when other working men have finished and can stroll round with hands-in-pockets, we have those cows to milk again. Surely some consideration should be shown to people on the land, working long hours, early and late. There is no such thing with them as paying 6s. for a seat in a theatre and enjoying their evenings—country people have no opportunity of doing that. And surely these are people who deserve more consideration than appears to be generally given them at the present time. I need say no more at this stage; but if the Bill does go into Committee I shall certainly move to reduce the amount of the tax.

**SIR E. H. WITTENOOM (North):** In rising to make a few remarks on the difficult position in which we find ourselves, I throw myself on the sympathy of members on both sides of the House, because in regard to this matter I feel that one can only plead expediency and necessity. I am confident that no Government would impose taxation if it could possibly avoid that course; at the same time, Ministers must find revenue to keep the country going. That is the position we find ourselves in. After listening to the speech on the Bill by the Colonial Secretary, one must admit

that he placed the case before us in a fair and lucid manner, and that his explanations were very reasonable. To my mind, at any rate, they were convincing. I came here to listen to the debate with a thoroughly open mind. I heard the Minister's remarks, and while I need hardly say I was not much in favour of extra taxation, yet when he placed before us the urgent necessity which exists for farther revenue and the ways open to us for raising extra revenue, I could not help thinking that he had placed the matter carefully and fairly before us, and that his explanation of the position was a reasonable one. The questions he asked us to consider were—in the first place, was additional revenue required? secondly, if it was required, was the proposed tax the best and fairest means of raising it? And he reasoned very well from that standpoint; for although I had an opinion that an income tax would be better than a land tax, yet after he stated very clearly that we already had an income tax yielding something like £137,000 a year in the form of a duty on companies' dividends and which we would lose in the event of an income tax being introduced, I came to the conclusion that a land tax was preferable after all. In the circumstances it should be apparent to Mr. McLarty that if an income tax were imposed, those people whom he is trying to protect would have to pay more than they would pay under a land tax.

HON. E. McLARTY: No; if persons have no income, how can you tax them under an income tax?

SIR E. H. WITTENOOM: That, at any rate, is my opinion. I was convinced by the remarks of the Minister that in the first place extra revenue was necessary. He pointed out that we were faced with a deficiency of something like £250,000, and this has to be made up somehow. If it is not possible to meet this by an income tax, it seems to me that there is no alternative but to make it up by a land tax. This deficiency of £250,000 the Minister explained would be made up by £60,000 it was anticipated this land tax would yield, and £200,000 which the Government expects to save by economy in the administration of departments. He went on to explain that the position we found ourselves in was entirely due

to our having joined Federation: and while I am sorry to find the position is such as he has shown it to be, there is a certain amount of satisfaction to me in knowing that remarks I made in a debate at the opening of this session are so fully borne out; for I then said that in the first place we had no right to join Federation, that in the second place we had been losing by Federation ever since. In these circumstances, finding that we have a deficit of £250,000 to make up and that the Government intends to retrench to the extent of £200,000, and is expecting to get £60,000 from this tax, I find myself reluctantly compelled to say that I must support the second reading of this Bill. My chief objection to the tax before the House is that it reaches only one class, and unfortunately the very class that is doing its best to develop the State. The Minister has been at some pains to make it clear that the tax has been imposed only as a revenue tax, that it is not part of the policy of the Government to impose this purely as a land tax with the object of bursting up large estates or to harass landowners. The Minister was particularly careful to state that, and I was extremely pleased to hear him; because it is within my recent recollection that the Premier stated recently that in his earliest utterance as a member of Parliament he had said he would like to see the establishment of a land tax. I am glad, therefore, that the better counsels of a majority of the Cabinet have prevailed; for the Colonial Secretary has assured us that the policy of the Government is not to regard this purely as a land tax, but as a revenue tax. In any other circumstances, a more impolitic measure or a more unpopular measure could not possibly be devised. Here we have a State which, in the event of its mineral wealth deteriorating, will be dependent for its very existence on its horticulture and agriculture; yet we find the Government introducing this tax to harass—or rather it is claimed that the tax is not introduced with the object of harassing landowners—at all events it has been decided that we must impose this tax on the very people who are trying to develop our horticultural and agricultural resources. What do we find is the policy of the Government? While spending large sums in the upkeep of an



Agent General's office in London, and spending money as far as the Labour people will allow them to spend it, which is very little, in trying to swell the tide of immigration, while also maintaining an expensive Agricultural Department and an Agricultural Bank, all kept up expensively and well kept up, with a system of lending money on generous terms for assisting the development of the State lands, endeavouring to assist the development of horticulture and agriculture and everything connected with the land; yet having all these maintained at great expense, the first measure the Government can devise to obtain extra revenue is a measure to tax the very land we are trying to develop. [MEMBER: Why do you support it, then?] I said I found myself compelled reluctantly to support the second reading, and I am now pointing out the difficulties of the position. What must intending immigrants from the old country, the Continent of Europe, or the Eastern States of Australia think of this position, with the superficial knowledge they have of it? They will say, "Here is a community which is offering every inducement to settle its land, the land is actually given away, and now it is intended to tax the land—what an extraordinary policy!" I am not saying anything as to the facts of the case. I know as well as other members the difficulties of the position; but I am endeavouring to show how other people may view it. As instancing the unfairness of this tax, take the case of a man who has saved money and put it into the Savings Bank or some other bank, and gets his 3 per cent. or  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. That man has not the courage to invest his money himself, but sits still and draws his interest and never bothers about the development of the country. "Wise man," one member says. But another man puts his money into land; perhaps he takes up a farm, clears and develops it; or perhaps he buys a block near a town with the idea of helping in the development of some suburb. What is the result? This man is to be taxed, while the other man who puts his money into a bank is not to be taxed under this Bill. That is one of the unfair features of it; and in the circumstances it seems unfortunate that this tax should be imposed. If one

desired to quote an example, one need only refer to what has already been touched on by Mr. McLarty, that under the Dividend Duty Act business firms which are not incorporated do not pay the duty, while there are other firms doing business here the owners of which I have heard are making as much as £20,000 a year, who live in other States, and because they are not incorporated they do not pay the dividend duty. Neither will they have to pay a land tax; therefore, those persons will get off scot-free under both. It would seem as though an income tax would meet that position; but the Minister has pointed out that we already have a kind of income tax, and that we would lose the £137,000 a year which it yields if we were to institute an income tax in its place. In view of this objection there seems to be no alternative but to adopt this land tax; but if anyone can show me before the debate closes some other alternative, I shall be only too pleased to advocate it. I have been forced to this conclusion by the arguments of the Minister. Another reason which has induced me to agree to the second reading of the Bill is the provision made that every year the amount of the tax will be submitted for the consent of Parliament. That, at all events, gives us some control in the matter. If it is found that the tax is bringing in more than it was anticipated would be required, the amount can be reduced. [HON. W. MALEY: But this House cannot reduce it.] If it was proposed that the amount of the tax should be settled for say five years, I hardly think I would be inclined to agree; but as the amount is to be submitted annually to Parliament, I think that may be accepted as a fair compromise. The fundamental feature of this Bill is the basis of valuation. A question has been put to the Minister as to the basis of valuation, and he has replied that the basis of valuation to be adopted is that in force in the various municipal and roads boards districts.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: For the first year.

SIR E. H. WITTENOOM: In addition to that, there is to be a limit of £50 a foot on the valuation of any town block.

**THE COLONIAL SECRETARY:** Any town property that has improvements equal to £50 a foot in value will be deemed to be improved.

**SIR E. H. WITTENOOM:** That is better. I understood the Minister to say that the valuation was to be limited so that if a man owned land with a frontage of 300 feet he could not be taxed on a higher value than £50. We find that in taking the valuations of municipalities and roads districts as bases for the tax, the Government are making an avenue for the exercise of economy by taking away the subsidies to these local bodies. But what is the obvious inference? That the municipalities and roads boards will raise their valuations so as to make up the sums of which they have been deprived by the withdrawal of Government subsidies.

**THE COLONIAL SECRETARY:** I did not say that the Government would take away the subsidies, but that the subsidies would be reduced 20 per cent.

**SIR E. H. WITTENOOM:** And therefore the local bodies will increase their valuations to that extent, and get the same subsidies as they have had in the past. Then we find that the basis of the valuation is to be "such reasonable conditions of sale as a *bona fide* seller would require." There are all sorts of sales. We cannot foretell what valuations will be made on that basis; and some of them may be most extreme valuations. Here is a case in point. In a country district where the roads board valued freehold lands at from 10s. to £1 an acre, the Government recently threw open a reserve and offered it for sale in 50-acre or 100-acre blocks. The neighbouring settlers were eager to get the land, and did not care what price they paid. So the Government fixed for this bush land an upset price of £5 an acre. The lots were simply rushed, though the roads board valued cleared land in the neighbourhood at from 10s. to £1. Are such valuations to be taken as a basis for this tax? If so, we can imagine what will be the return.

**THE COLONIAL SECRETARY:** The owners will have a right to appeal.

**SIR E. H. WITTENOOM:** They may; but we shall find that the Government will appoint zealous valuers who will be anxious to return large sums to

the Treasury; and they will naturally make their valuations as high as possible, so that instead of £60,000, as anticipated by the Government, or £160,000 as I interjected the other day, a much larger sum will be realised by the impost. I am perfectly confident that the valuations will be very much higher than those instanced by the Minister. I shall therefore support Mr. McLarty's proposal that when the Bill is in Committee a suggestion be sent to the other House that the rate of the tax be reduced from 1½d. to 1d. I am surprised to find also that pastoral leases are not included in the exemptions. This omission seems to me most unfair, when I reflect that this is a class of land of which the lessees can never obtain the freehold. I see that timber leases have been exempted, and very properly too; because the lessees can never obtain the freehold of such lands. But to tax pastoral leases, which cannot be made valuable except by bold pioneering, by struggles for water and fights with drought, seems to me most unfair. The pastoralists pay a pretty high rent; for although 10s. per thousand acres may not seem high, yet in many cases a thousand acres will not keep one sheep in time of drought. If the Government guaranteed 12 inches of rain per annum, the pastoralists would be glad to pay £2 a thousand acres. In the circumstances 10s. is a very fair rent. In referring to this matter I do not speak of the properties around Perth, Northam, York and Geraldton: I speak of the North-West, Kimberley, East Murchison, and other places where the rainfall is most unsatisfactory and uncertain. Pastoral properties in those districts should be altogether exempt; therefore I shall hold myself free to move in Committee that the words "pastoral leases" be added to the exemptions in Clause 11. The absentee does not seem to me to have been treated very fairly; and I agree with the remarks made in another place by the Hon. F. H. Piessé, who objected to penalising as an absentee a man who left the State for 12 months. We see in the Press that a man who never travels is generally scorned when he happens to take a public position, because he has not seen any but his own country. Therefore when he takes the trouble to travel about the world to gain a little experience,

and finds 12 months insufficient, he is to be penalised as an absentee, though he is trying to gain information with a view to benefiting the country. Surely two years is a fair time for a trip to the northern hemisphere. In these circumstances I hope I shall have the support of the House in amending the Bill accordingly. There is another point which the Leader of the House did not quite clear up to my satisfaction, that is whether companies whose headquarters are in Great Britain, and who have branches in this State, are to be considered absentees. To treat them thus would be most unfair, impolitic, and unwise. Many companies on which we rely for a large influx of capital have their head offices in London. They never have been and never will be in the State; but they have so much faith in it that they have sent their money here and have opened branches. Surely they are not to be considered absentees?

HON. M. L. MOSS: They can register in the State.

SIR E. H. WITTENOOM: They should not have to pay the extra 50 per cent. If they are subject to this absentee tax, there is not a bank except one, there is hardly a trading company, and no pastoral company, that will not be classed as an absentee. This seems to me most unwise, if members agree that capital is of any value in the country. If capital is not wanted, by all means proceed to tax those corporations as absentees. But to tax as an absentee a London company which has sufficient confidence in this State to establish a branch here, and send out perhaps two millions of money, is an absolutely unwise policy. I was pleased to hear that the administration of the Act is to be extremely economical; and that is only fair, though I hope there will be no attempt to impair the efficiency of the administration by too much cutting down of expenses. Mr. McLarty alluded to the Coolgardie Water Scheme. Whatever may be the present policy, all I can say is, I happened to be in the Cabinet which approved of and introduced that scheme, which was introduced on the express understanding that the scheme was to pay for itself; that the country did not consider itself justified in spending for the benefit of a small area the sum of £2,500,000 unless the scheme had some

chance of paying; and the price of 3s. 6d. per thousand gallons then fixed for the water was to pay for the construction, the working expenses, interest, and a sinking fund sufficient to repay the whole capital in 10 years, on condition that the consumption was 5,000,000 gallons per day. On that estimate the scheme was adopted. Whatever may be the policy now, the original understanding was that the enterprise should pay for itself; and it is for the present Government to justify its conduct if it allows this scheme to be unprofitably conducted. The water was badly wanted on the gold-fields. It saved the Railway Department I believe some £40,000 or £50,000; and from all sides the Government of the day were urged that the water would enable mining companies to work low-grade reefs otherwise unpayable; but we find that once the water reached the fields the high rate of wages was urged as a reason for not working those reefs. In connection with this Bill there are many small points which I will not labour now. It seems to me that on the second reading we are discussing the policy of the tax, or the question whether the Bill should be read a second time. Of one little matter I must ask for an explanation; that is, the provision in Clause 2, paragraph (b), definition of "unimproved value." It seems to me extraordinary that the unimproved value of conditional purchase leases should be estimated on the fee simple when the fee simple has not been obtained. Why should not the estimate be based on the value of the acquired rights? The paragraph provides that the unimproved value means—

The capital sum for which the fee simple of such land would sell, on the assumption that the taxpayer is the owner in fee simple, under such reasonable conditions of sale as a *bona fide* seller would require.

Why assume that the holder is the owner, when he is not? If we send out a valuator, and the purchaser has been in occupation for six years instead of 10, why assume that he is the owner of the fee simple? Why not amalgamate paragraphs (a) and (b), if that is a fair assumption? Probably the Minister will explain that matter when replying. I do not know that I need say much more. I will summarise the few remarks I have

made. Firstly, when the Land Tax Bill comes forward I shall use my best endeavour to have the amount reduced from 1½d. in the pound to 1d.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Try 1½d. for the first year.

SIR E. H. WITTENOOM: You can make it 1½d. afterwards; let us have 1d. first. I would like to see the pastoral leases exempted from the operation of the tax; and an owner should not be considered an absentee until he has been over two years away from the State instead of one year. I am sorry I cannot say in the usual formal way, that I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill; but I am at a certain loss for words to state that I find myself reluctantly compelled to support the second reading owing to the exigencies and my inability to suggest an alternative.

HON. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan-Suburban): If there had been in my mind any lingering doubt as to the attitude I should adopt towards this measure, that doubt is removed by the remarks of the member who has just spoken. But while I think very much on the same lines as that member, my thoughts have led me to a different conclusion, and I think the only fair course that is open for me to take is to oppose the second reading. I would like to recapitulate some of the reasons why I wish to do so. I put to myself that short catechism which the Leader of the House laid before members for their consideration. These three questions—there were three I think—I have put to myself, and after a fair consideration of these three questions I find myself compelled to oppose the second reading. These three questions were, if my memory serves me aright, firstly whether this taxation is necessary, and whether we require the extra revenue; secondly whether the tax proposed is fair and equitable; and thirdly whether this description of tax tends to the prosperity of the State as a whole. Now members will see that question No. 1 is what one may describe as a double-barrelled question, "Whether this tax is necessary and whether we require the extra revenue." Let us take the last part of that question first—whether we require extra revenue. I never knew a Government yet that did not require

extra revenue. Members who have had experience of administering departments know very well that when the Estimates come before them they have to be cut down as a rule about 50 per cent., therefore it is abundantly evident that any extra revenue lying around loosely is required by every Government in power. Taking the question whether this taxation is necessary at the present stage, I would say that so far as I have gone into the subject, and I have not gone into it very deeply, I am compelled to answer the question in the negative. Among the propositions which the Leader of the House has made, and I may say in this connection that the Government do not seem to take the Legislature into their confidence as regards the proposed distribution of revenue from the tax as they might, it seems that economy in administration in one or two directions is to save £200,000 per annum. I may say that economy in administration or rather the securing of a greater amount of revenue from some of the great works of the State, works for which the State borrowed money and pledged its good name, does not seem to enter into the calculation of the Government at all. Sir Edward Wittenoom has referred to the Coolgardie Water Scheme. Let me turn up the latest report of the Goldfields Water Supply administration, first remembering as the member who has just sat down has reminded us, that the very essence of the scheme when laid before Parliament was that it should be a reproductive work; that the scheme was to pay working expenses, interest and sinking fund. Now what do we find, when we study the report for the last year ended 30th June, 1906? That instead of paying working expenses, interest and sinking fund, the scheme has got behind during last year by approximately £80,000.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: In sinking fund.

HON. W. KINGSMILL: I am speaking of the three as a whole, and the three must be taken as a whole. Every scheme that is reproductive has to pay working expenses, interest, and sinking fund.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The charges were fixed by the Government of which the hon. member was a member.

HON. W. KINGSMILL: I remember that, and I would remind the Minister

that I had no part or parcel in fixing the charges except as a member of Cabinet. The fixing of the charges, as the hon. member knows perfectly well, is on the recommendation of the Minister controlling the department. His recommendation is always accepted unless there are weighty reasons to the contrary. But if mistakes have been made by a former Government, let it be the ambition of the present Government to rectify them. The Bill before the House, the hon. member said, will produce a revenue of £60,000 per annum. The debit of the Coolgardie Water Scheme is £78,000 per annum; so that if that debit is wiped off, and I think there are ways and means of wiping it off, and I say the country is morally bound to wipe it off, the Government has an extra amount over and above the amount to be received from the Bill, of £18,000. We find that water is supplied to the large mines of Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie, and Boulder at a cost of 5s. 3d. per 1,000 gallons. In turning over the next page of the report we find the average cost, including sinking fund—and as I have pointed out it is absolutely necessary that it should include sinking fund—of the water delivered is 7s. 11d. per 1,000 gallons. That means we are selling to the very large mines, many of which are paying large dividends to owners elsewhere, water at a loss of 2s. 8d. per 1,000 gallons.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. member knows perfectly well the mines would not buy it at any other price; they would use salt water.

HON. W. KINGSMILL: I am sorry to hear the member say that, in one way; but in another way it bears out the attitude I have assumed ever since I have been in Parliament, that the Coolgardie Water Scheme was not so abundantly necessary as it was made out to be when initiated. Steps have been taken with regard to one of the other great works of the Government—I allude to the Fremantle harbour—in the shape of a Bill which has already been before this House, to ensure that the working expenses, interest, and sinking fund shall be paid by the Harbour Trust. And I may point out that when that work was spoken of in Parliament, it was not classed as a reproductive work. Yet we find that in the measure which it is pro-

posed to adopt there is a provision to make the work pay expenses and interest and sinking fund. It is practically paying that now. If the Coolgardie Water Scheme only paid as good a proportion of the working expenses, interest, and sinking fund as the Fremantle harbour does, instead of having a deficit of £78,000 there would only be a deficit of from £18,000 to £20,000. [Interjection.] The sinking fund is very different, and as the member must realise, it is necessary that the sinking fund should be very different.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Coolgardie Water Scheme pays almost the same sinking fund as the Harbour Trust does to-day.

HON. W. KINGSMILL: I would point out to the member in the first place that the functions which are performed by the two schemes are different. The one work is a perishable work, the other is not. The member must admit that that must be taken into consideration when speaking of the sinking fund.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. member said the Coolgardie Water Scheme should pay the same interest as the Harbour Trust.

HON. W. KINGSMILL: I said if it paid the same proportion of interest, working expenses, and sinking fund.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: It does. The Harbour Trust pays a trifle over four per cent., and the Coolgardie Water Scheme pays almost the same.

HON. W. KINGSMILL: I tried a few minutes ago to prove that it is absolutely necessary that the Coolgardie Water Scheme should pay working expenses, interest, and sinking fund, as it is a more perishable work than the Fremantle Harbour Works. Therefore it is necessary that a larger sinking fund should be charged, and whatever sinking fund is charged should be met. As I was about to remark when led away from my subject by the Leader of the House, if the Government thinks fit to take steps to insure that these charges shall be paid by one great work, which at its inception was not classed as reproductive, it is its duty to insist that these charges shall be paid by the other great work, which at its inception was enumerated as a reproductive work. There are other ways in which I think the administration might

effect a good deal of economy. Mr. McFarty has mentioned various directions in which economy could be effected. He has spoken amongst other things of the police, hospitals, education, and other matters, more under the control of the Colonial Secretary. But the Leader of the House must know that unfortunately all the departments under the control of the Colonial Secretary must grow with the progress of the State, and we could not possibly afford to effect economy in them. We could not effect economy in the protection of life and property; least of all can we afford to effect economy in the direction of education as is proposed by the present Government. Nor could we effect economy in the protection of lunatics and the sick. In all these cases it is extremely hard to effect economy. When the Leader of the House was speaking he said that the principal increases in administration occurred in the Lands and Mines Departments. I think it must surely, without impairing the efficiency of the departments, be easily possible to effect economy in these departments. Take the Lands Department; members know that the percentage of the administration expenses to revenue of the Lands Department has gone up from about 40 per cent. some years ago to 82 per cent., and we know the administration expenses are double in the Lands Department of this State what they are in any other State of Australia, yet we do not get better served by the Lands Department than any other State in Australia does by its Lands Department. If that is so, why have we to pay such a very much larger percentage than is paid in the other States? It is idle for members to say the area of the State has any very great effect on this, because the energies of the Lands Department are practically confined to an area which is not larger but is even smaller than the area of the same activity in very many of the Eastern States. We know that the principal work of the Lands Department is in putting settlers on the land. We also know that the part they put them on is a very small proportion of Western Australia, and also that the Government, without any undue trouble, derives very considerable revenue from some of the remaining parts of Western Australia, without any corresponding expense. Such

parts I may mention as Kimberley and the North-West, which practically cost the Lands Department nothing or very little indeed; and the revenue derived from them is proportionately a large one. That being so, I think that economies could be effected in the Lands Department. I have some diffidence in advising economy in the Mines Department, but it is clearly the duty of the Government to see that it is getting the best value for the money in that department, and it seems to me from the report which has been lately published by the Commission on Public Batteries that good value for the money has not been obtained. I know that in many instances good value has not been obtained, and, as one having experience personally of the maladministration, I may instance the shocking fiasco known as the Ravenshorpe smelter. I think there are members in the House who are acquainted with that district. As one of the pioneers of that district I know exactly what happened around there, and I know how not only the prospectors but also the Government itself has lost a very considerable sum of money through absolute mismanagement of that place.

HON. J. T. GLOWREY: It was an experiment, and it has proved to be a very good thing.

HON. W. KINGSMILL: What I regret is that an immense amount of money was wasted, belonging to the prospectors and the Government, which need not have been wasted.

HON. J. T. GLOWREY: They had to gain knowledge, and it could only be gained by experience.

HON. W. KINGSMILL: A little instance came incidentally to my knowledge the other day, which opens up perhaps another avenue in which revenue might be increased, and this instance will be of great interest to anybody in the habit of sending goods down the Great Southern line. A friend of mine the other day had four tons of mixed goods to send to Broomehill. He instituted inquiries, and having communicated with the firm he had them for, they informed him that by sending the goods by rail to Albany and reconsigning them from Albany to Broomehill, he could effect a considerable saving.

HON. J. T. GLOWREY: That is an old game.

HON. W. KINGSMILL: Quite so, and it is an extremely bad game. These four tons of goods were sent from Perth to Albany, and back to Broomehill; and roughly speaking the charge was £16. If, however, he had sent them direct to Broomehill, the charge would have been some £22. So we find that for the luxury of carrying these goods and taking up the time of our trains and railway employees for an extra 200 miles, the State has the privilege of having to pay £6 extra. If that anomaly exists, is it not time it was stopped?

THE HONORARY MINISTER: It was done all the time you were in the Government.

HON. W. KINGSMILL: It is the first I have heard of it. I am very sorry I missed it, because I think this country has no right to go on endeavouring to compete against water carriage and bewailing the fact that Providence has surrounded the South-West corner of this State with water. This letter I have is dated the 22nd September, and was sent by a gentleman most members of the House know, and who is thoroughly reliable.

HON. R. LAURIE: It is the port rate.

HON. W. KINGSMILL: Not exactly. I understand that the rate to Albany is £4, and that cannot be a payable rate.

HON. R. LAURIE: It is the port rate.

HON. W. KINGSMILL: The hon. member must admit that it is a most unpayable game for the railways to endeavour to compete with water, and for the State not to utilise in the other way the advantages Providence has given us.

HON. J. T. GLOWREY: It is done in the other States.

HON. W. KINGSMILL: Yes; it seems to me an old-fashioned procedure. Then we find that part of this amount will be taken in paying interest on that most expensive item of Government expenditure, the additions and improvements to open lines. It occurs to me that a little more supervision might be exercised over this branch of the department. From Chidlow's Well onwards there is to be not an addition or improvement to opened lines but a new railway. Whether that rail-

way is going to benefit the country or not is hard to say. I am referring not to the Eastern Goldfields railway, but to some deviation which is being arranged beyond Chidlow's Well, which so far as I am aware Parliament has practically never heard of and for which no special authority has been issued.

HON. R. F. SHOLL: They are duplicating the line, I understand.

HON. W. KINGSMILL: To Spencer's Brook; possibly that is it. At all events I say that so far as I can see, Parliament has a very natural control over this work, and possibly if Parliament exercises that control money may be saved in this direction also. The next point we have to consider is whether the tax proposed is fair and equitable, and on this question I am compelled to answer in the negative. As a matter of fact, this tax is going to press heavily on one class. The only point upon which I feel some difficulty in arriving at a conclusion is as to which class it is going to press the most heavily on. Members who have spoken have said the tax is going to press very heavily upon those men upon whom the future of Western Australia to a great extent depends. I refer to the agricultural community. Then on the other hand we have the assurance of the gentleman who above all others should know best upon whom the incidence of taxation will fall, the Colonial Treasurer, that the tax will affect these people not at all, but will be principally taken from those in the cities and spent on those very worthy members of society.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: He did not say it would not affect them at all.

HON. W. KINGSMILL: Perhaps I am going too far; but he said it would affect them very little, and it would be paid by the city men. Members recollect no doubt the memorable letter sent to I think the Lower Blackwood progress committee, setting forth that view, and setting forth the view of a gentleman who undoubtedly should be an authority on the subject. Then, again, we hear that it will press extremely heavily on the farmer. I have heard of instances where it will actually do so. Be that as it may,

I maintain that this tax is not an equitable tax, simply because it fails in that characteristic of a good tax, namely that its incidence should be wide. There are numbers of people who will escape the incidence of taxation who should not escape. Given that the tax is necessary, and I do not for a moment admit it, I say its incidence is too narrow, and the tax should have taken another form. Again, we ask whether this restriction of the tax would tend to the prosperity of the State as a whole. In answer to this question I may use the usual Ministerial formula and say "No. 3 answered by Nos. 1 and 2." I think that is what it amounts to. It cannot tend to the prosperity of any country in my opinion to impose a tax which in the first place is not necessary, and in the second place is not equitable. Furthermore, it seems to me almost a breach of confidence to encourage people to come here on the assumption that there is no land tax and on the inference that it is not likely there will be one, and then for these unfortunate people to come and find they have got to a country where there is a land tax. Therefore, I think it must have a deterrent effect on land settlement in the future. I have heard opinions expressed that such will not be the case. That, however, is not my opinion. I am sorry so far as I am concerned I have only been able to answer in the affirmative two and a half of the three questions propounded by the Colonial Secretary, and that being so, and being very much in the same position as Sir Edward Wittenoom with regard to the conclusions I have come to, I feel compelled to vote against the second reading. What are the objects of the tax? Members of both Houses of Parliament have been going round the country and claiming all sorts of things. It has been represented as a tax to pay interest on farther spur lines, to pay interest on present spur lines. One Minister at Belmont the other day advised the electors of Belmont to support the tax because they asked for a railway. The inference was obvious. I am one of the representatives of that part of the country, and so far no rush has been made to me to get the tax passed. Again,

we are informed by the Colonial Secretary that the tax is to meet the general deficit. I do not see why I should not have some little say in nominating the objects of this tax. I beg to nominate the tax as being a tax for the purpose of paying the deficit on the Coolgardie water supply. With regard to the Bill itself, I propose to say practically nothing, because I most sincerely hope that it will not get into Committee; but, if it does get into Committee, there are one or two things which will want a good deal of elucidation. One is the very material difference which is made in the exemptions in the taxation of city property and those in the taxation of country property. Another is how on earth the Government are going to reconcile the various valuations which are now being made by the local authorities and which they will adopt for the first year. We know that some roads boards are absurdly low; but there is one board case in which that does not apply. A man with whom I am very well acquainted possesses a farm close to Midland Junction. Half of it consists of farming and grazing country in the summer time, and the other half is not worth anything in the winter or summer. The roads board valued the whole of that at not less than £15 an acre, and they are charging 2d. in the pound. (Interjection.) It cannot become building land because in the winter time it is flooded invariably, and it is not garden land for the same reason. This gentleman is in the position of paying 2s. 6d. an acre to that roads board, and that valuation has been accepted by the Government. Again with regard to absentees, I am very much of the same opinion as Sir Edward Wittenoom. I think with regard to them the measure is extremely harsh. To sum up I wish to oppose this Bill because I am perfectly convinced, and anyone who reads the papers must be perfectly convinced, that it is disapproved of by the country. I am convinced it is disapproved of by all that portion of the country I represent. I therefore oppose it because it is inopportune, and last of all because the purpose for which it is brought forward is absolutely inefficient.



At 6:30, the PRESIDENT left the Chair.  
At 7:30, Chair resumed.

HON. E. M. CLARKE (South-West): In speaking to this Bill no one realises more than myself the important question at issue. It has been borne upon us for several years that things are not exactly what we would like them to be. I hold that in a case like this the country should be seized of all the facts and that the taxpayers should know exactly how things stand; and I purpose in the course of my remarks somewhat to give my ideas of the financial position of the State at the present time. I wish it to be clearly understood that I cast no reflection on any Ministry, but I say it is up to the country to know exactly the financial position. That being the case, it is sufficient justification for my taking up the time of the House. I do not wish to be classified as a Jeremiah making lamentations or anything of that sort, but I like to look at things fairly in the face. Nearly every Treasurer in his Estimates has tried to put the position in the best light possible. In some instances that is a very good thing, but it seems to me that it must be apparent to all that only a few years back we had a surplus whereas now that surplus has gradually disappeared until there is a deficit; and the question naturally arises, what is to be done? All I can say is, that everyone should be in favour of such a tax as this so soon as we are perfectly satisfied that it is absolutely necessary. I propose to point out, a little later on, the necessity of the tax. It is said by every Ministry that they go in for a bold policy. Well, to my mind a bold policy is often a foolhardy policy. The idea I have always carried through life has been a policy of caution. Mention has been made of the Coolgardie Water Scheme. I have the greatest respect for Sir John Forrest, but the Coolgardie Water Scheme was a thing upon which he and I differed. I told him that I believed he was considerably over-estimating the revenue from the scheme and under-estimating the cost, and I said that in the near future the goldfields people would not only want the water at cost but would be asking for

it for nothing. We are now somewhat realising that. It must be clearly understood that before the Government come forward with such a measure of taxation as is proposed in this Bill, they should say in the first place that they have exercised economy, not only by word, but in deed. I ask, would things be carried on as they are at present, if the State were a private enterprise? I am sorry to say that it was the Colonial Secretary said that we must increase our revenue to meet our expenditure. That sounds well, but my advice would be to make our expenditure in accordance with our revenue. It must occur to everybody that, at some time or other in the near future, we will have exhausted all our sources of taxation. I think the Minister will agree with me that a land tax is not absolutely the last resource is pretty nearly the last. I think the Minister believes an income tax is the last resource. All I can say is that an income tax will be many times harder than a land tax. I am not speaking against it or for it because it affects myself any more than any one else. I take it that members should speak in the interests of the State at large. In my public capacity I have done things absolutely dead against my own interests. Years ago when I was mayor of the little birthplace, Bunbury, it was remarked that one could always tell where the mayor was living by looking for the most neglected street. That being so, I can say that I am speaking not only on behalf of the country but also on behalf of the main towns in the State. It has been said that we must do something, that we must not stand still at the risk of being ridiculed; but I admire the sentiment expressed by Mr. Daglish when he said that we must mark time for a bit. I go one step better and say it is better for us to simply take soundings to see where we are, rather than go on in this, I will not say blind manner, but go on and on and eventually get the ship of State waterlogged. The present state of affairs must stop. If we were a private concern we would balance up our books, see where we were, see what we could cut down, and see how we could go on in the future. I am not a croaker, but

caution has been my watchword through life. If we look at our industries we are confronted with the fact that the gold output is less, also that next month there is going to be a severe crisis in regard to our timber, because it has come to that pitch now that I believe there is going to be an absolute strike among the timber hands all through the mills. We find also that our coal is no better than it ought to be. I am ready to admit straight away that it is costing us more than it is worth to the State. It is a good fuel in its way, but the time must come when the coal must be got out of the pits and put on the market at its true commercial value. In Dr. Jack's report we will find the statement that the coal is costing something I think under 3s. per ton more than it is worth. Members may say that this is only a local affair so far as Bunbury is concerned, but we must bear in mind that there are many people at Collie dependent absolutely on the coal industry. Though I strongly advocate the use of our coal though it costs a fraction more than the imported coal, I say that it is costing us now more than it is really worth on the market. If the Commissioner of Railways had his way he says he would not use a ton of it. Then we come to one of the things upon which I think we shall be in the immediate future dependent, that is agriculture. I think all those engaged in agriculture will say that we are fast approaching the time when we shall be able to supply the whole of our local demands and shall have a surplus; but unfortunately, we know that in practice we cannot jump from the one year when we have enough to supply local demands to the year when we have enough over the local demand to send away. There must be an interval between the time when we overtake the demand and the time when we have a sufficient quantity for export. Any reasonable man will say that it will be some years before we will have enough to export. I have heard much of the cry "get people on the land," but I say advisedly that this sort of talk is generally made use of by those who know the least about the subject. I appeal to anyone engaged in agriculture in this State as to whether

there are not scores of men on the land at present to whom one's heart goes out in pity. I have seen men on the land, and if I wanted to make a good enemy or to do anyone a bad turn, I would put him on the land straight away. I have sounded a warning with regard to what I consider is going to happen. It has been said that after this year things will get no worse than they are, meaning that the last of the sliding scale will be gone on the 8th of October next. All I can say is that I am absolutely satisfied that there are worse times ahead than when that comes off. We are not at the turn of the tide yet by long odds. It will be some time before we export. We cannot go straight away and force things. The settlement of the people on the land has been running for all it is worth for a good many years, and what is the result? Agriculture is not all it should be. For instance, how many thousands of pounds are sent out of the State every month for hens' eggs, and for butter? In all these things I am absolutely certain we shall not overtake the demand in this State for a good many years to come. How is it that we have not done this sort of thing? Yet in this State we have men equal to the men of the other States, and with as much grit as men in the other States. Until we reach the time when we can overtake the demand in these things and keep the money in the State, I am certain we will have a worse time to face in the future than we have at the present time. I hold that it is correct policy to produce whatever we can in this State; but at the present time we are sending away money for many commodities we should produce ourselves, and to this end I hold that our industries should be fostered. But is it fostering our agricultural industry to practically give people land by allowing them to take it up at 10s. per acre, and then tax them another 10s. per acre as soon as they have taken it up? The Minister may remind me that small holders are exempt under the Bill; but my object is to show that this exemption will not always be available for them. With regard to the Coolgardie Water Scheme, the season just concluded

has been an exceptionally successful one; and yet we find that the administration is in round figures £78,000 to the bad. I think the goldfields users of the water should pay interest, sinking fund, and working expenses in connection with that scheme—beyond that I would ask nothing. What is going to happen! Without speaking against the scheme, we know that in a few years the pipes will wear out, and the scheme will become a burden on the State in having to replace these pipes. While I admit that more revenue is required by the Government, yet the first thing to be done is to ascertain whether there are no means of saving by reducing expenditure. The Colonial Secretary is credited by one member with having stated that the Government anticipates by economy to effect a saving of £250,000 a year. I do not think the Minister committed himself to that extent. I do not agree with the Minister when he says that because we want money we must levy taxation. After the taxpayers have been satisfied that every means of reasonable economy has been practised, and that no farther careful administration can be exercised, then the people of the State will be prepared to pay more taxation. The question arises, how can we make up this deficiency? I say, bring in an income tax. We have a dividend duty tax, it is true; but, as has been pointed out, several large firms such as Bean Bros., Foy and Gibson, and others do not contribute to that tax. An income tax would fall upon those best able to bear taxation. Some little time ago I supported a proposal to wipe out the expenditure of £6000 a year at present paid as salaries to members of the Legislative Council; and so far as I am concerned, if there is need for economy, I would be again willing to support that suggestion. Why not do away with the worthless commissions we have year after year, such as Dr. Roth's report on the native question, which damned us in the eyes of the people of England, who were driven by that report to regard us as a lot of barbarians? What became of that costly Civil Service Commission report? Of what use to the country are the lengthy reports of speeches made in Parliament, which cost

goodness knows how much for their publication? Those are the little things which tend to increase the expenditure, and there are other similar ways in which we could save. It has been said that the Government intends to reduce the municipal and roads boards grants by 20 per cent. I have always advocated that rates for local requirements should be levied by roads boards; and the Brunswick roads board, to which I am a ratepayer, was the first in this State to strike a substantial rate. These grants now amount to something like £150,000, and I suggest that the Government should reduce the grants by 50 per cent. When it was hinted at a roads board conference that boards should tax themselves, some of the rich boards which were favourably situated in the matter of obtaining material cheaply levied a rate of 1d., which in view of the subsidy meant that the Government was practically maintaining the roads for those boards. Other boards which levied a substantial rate prior to the passing of the 1902 Act now are rated right up to the hilt. Municipalities are also culpable in the matter of rating themselves at a paltry figure; but roads boards are so to a greater extent. If the Government assistance to boards were reduced, it would mean that those boards which rate themselves at a proper figure would have good roads, while other boards which imposed only a trivial rate would not have good roads. In the case of a newly-established board or municipality, I would make an exception. Another thing is that while I would not attempt to prevent any honest invalid from availing himself of the services of our public hospitals, I would ask, is it right (as I have seen stated in a public report) that there should be something like £130,000 owing by patients for services rendered in our hospitals, and the amounts not collected?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: No; the amount is £20,000, and it extends over 20 years.

HON. E. M. CLARKE: Is it not a fact that there are thousands of cases treated in our public hospitals for which the patients do not contribute a penny to the revenue, although well able to do so?

There has been a lot written of late on the State assistance given to agriculture, and in regard to the State experimental farms. I have been to the Chapman, Narrogin, and Hamel farms; and if I wanted a person instructed how to obtain a minimum income from a maximum of expenditure, I should certainly send him to one of those places. In going over the Chapman experimental farm, I thought that if the place were my own I should regard what had been done as an absolute waste of money. At Narrogin, I saw land described as A1 which was poor and altogether unsuited for the purpose to which it was put; and the appointments were on a lavish scale. There were all the paraphernalia for carrying on every class of farming operation; reminding me of a fully equipped train and engine, with no coal and not a drop of water. There was a potato-planter on the farm, and I ascertained that there were five acres of potato land to be planted, which is a sample of the expensive methods adopted. On the Narrogin farm they were trying experiments which were already three years old to some of the farmers they were supposed to be instructing. When I saw in the papers that it was intended to put in a tobacco plantation at Hamel, I was prepared to believe it. The promoter of the scheme gave me an opportunity of accepting a position as director. He had a prospectus drawn up in the usual way, setting forth that if one tobacco plant would yield four ounces of tobacco, 100 tobacco plants would yield 400 ounces; and this multiplied by the acreage available for planting would pan out a small fortune in three months, or something under that period. His company promotion failed; but the Government of the day employed that man to plant tobacco at Hamel—with what result? He planted at a time when he should have been harvesting; and I have been told that the whole of the tobacco obtained from that experiment could easily have been moved away in a wheelbarrow. That experiment cost this State something like £800; so much for the experimental farms! This Bill provides that if a person wishing to go on the land purchases from the Crown at 10s. per acre, he is to be for

five years exempt from the land tax. But if a son of mine elects to purchase land from a private person, my son is not exempt—not much! I wish it to be understood that I am speaking in general terms of the governments that are, have been, and are likely to be. I am pointing out what I think are errors of judgment. We find that owing to the Crown having no suitable land available, and to the Midland Company having some excellent land, the latter was cut up and sold at a good round figure. The Midland Company sold their land for a substantial sum, and the Crown land is sold at so low a price that it is practically given away. I think I am right in saying that the purchasers of the Midland lands have paid four times as much as the Crown customers; but the Midland purchasers are not exempt. Why not? Are they of another nationality, or are they not likely to do as much good on the land as Crown customers? Why should the former be exempt? I have not absolutely made up my mind as to how I shall vote on the second reading; but I am down at once on the exemption clause. It is wrong in principle to exempt for five years after the date of purchase those who purchase land from the Government. Here we are spending money *ad lib.* to get people on the land; and as soon as they get there, unless they happen to be fortunate enough to purchase from the Crown, we tax them. I anticipate that there is a limit beyond which we cannot tax a community like this. I realise that Perth and the goldfields will pay the greatest portion of this tax. I speak on behalf of the whole State; and I say that in a new country like this, which is trying to forge ahead, the land tax should be one of the last taxes on the list. I say that our industries are not flourishing; that things will be worse here than they are now; and I cannot see that the Government have made out a good case for the infliction of a land tax. If the Bill goes into Committee I will fight the exemption clause tooth and nail. The small landholder is possibly better able to pay his 10s. a year in taxation than the man who has for years held a property worth £4,000 and mortgaged at £2,000 is able to pay his

£15 or £20. How will such a man stand the tax? The Government may console themselves by saying that their customers are exempt; but that will not go down with the country, or with me. It has been said that I intend to support the Government in this measure. Well, if I were in the Assembly I might take a different view; but I consider that this is a place where members have to think as individuals, in the best interests of the country. We are not pledged to any particular measure, but pledged to do what we after mature consideration think best in the interests of the country.

#### MOTION—SCHOOL FEES REGULATIONS.

##### TO DISAPPROVE OF CHARGES.

Debate resumed from the 20th September, on the motion of the HON. J. W. LANGSFORD, affirming that to charge fees for scholars over 14 years of age is opposed to the public welfare.

HON. J. W. WRIGHT (Metropolitan): Whilst agreeing with most of the speeches on this subject, I should have liked to see the Government proposals go still further. Our educational system has gone ahead by leaps and bounds, to a far greater extent than was at first anticipated. I believe that the original idea was to educate the children of the people who could not afford to pay school fees. Now we find that not only the poorer classes, but nineteen out of twenty of the population, send their children to public schools. I should like to see the Government, instead of charging fees for children over 14 years of age, make education free throughout the State. At the present day we have a great example set us by the Japanese. When I was in England I made inquiries about the Japanese system, and found it the best I had ever heard of. In Japan education is free and compulsory. For every standard there is an examination. If a pupil fails to enter a certain standard he is allowed to try a second and even a third time. If he fails to pass then, he is passed out as being not worth the trouble of educating. A pupil who passes all the standards is asked what trade or profession he wishes

to learn. He makes his choice, and is apprenticed accordingly. After his apprenticeship, he must for a certain time serve the Government, which allows him enough pay for board and lodging and clothing, his service being otherwise free until he has earned a certain sum. After that, he can go where he will. When in England I noticed a ship-building yard in which no less than nineteen torpedo boats were on the stocks, being built for the Japanese Government, which had an agreement with the contractor that he should take two Japanese into his works for every boat under contract. The Japanese were there to learn the trade, and every night when they went home had to record what they had seen done during the day; and if they did not understand it, a man in charge gave the necessary explanation. A better system than that could hardly be found anywhere. The proposed charge of school fees is, I think, out of date, and a retrogressive step. I would sooner see education made altogether free than see a retrogression.

HON. J. M. DREW (Central): I must endorse the motion of Mr. Langsford. The action of the Minister for Education cannot be defended on any ground, either of economy or expediency. Of course, the finances are not in a flourishing condition, and the taxation Bill discussed this evening brings that fact forcibly before our minds; but I think the last subject of taxation should be the parents of children who seek education in our schools. The application of the pruning knife may be and is necessary in other directions; but I hope the aim of the Government will not be to hamper the mental development of the rising generation. In 1899 a Bill was introduced affirming the principle of free education. I am aware that by the Bill the Executive Council could make regulations enforcing the payment of fees by children over 14. But until recently no such thing was contemplated; and so far, no cogent arguments have been advanced, either in this House or elsewhere, to show the necessity or indeed the expediency of charging such fees. The question on which we want some information is, what saving is likely to be effected under the regulations? I have read that a saving

of £5,000 a year is anticipated; that 20 per cent. of the children attending the James Street school are over 14 years of age; and those who framed the regulations assumed, I dare say, that all children over 14 will remain at school, and that the revenue derived from our schools will consequently increase. But I feel certain that if these regulations are enforced, a large proportion of the children over 14 will be withdrawn—certainly all the children of the poorer sections of the community, who are now struggling and making great sacrifices in order to keep their children at school. They require the services of the children, and in many instances the children could earn money; but in addition to these sacrifices they are called on to pay 1s. per head in some cases and 2s. per head in others. These people would be enforced to withdraw their children from school, and everyone will admit the cause of education in Western Australia must suffer thereby. I think we should do all we possibly can to encourage people to send their children to school even after they are 14 years of age. It is stated in many quarters Australians are over-educated; there is too much education; but we frequently find the persons who advance this argument are pretty careful and anxious to see that their children receive higher education. What is good for one section of the community is also good for another section. I do not think the education likely to be received in the primary schools, although of a very high standard, will handicap any child in the future; indeed I am sure it will assist him largely in the battle of life, no matter what avocation he may pursue. I do not think it necessary to say more. I feel certain from the way in which members have received the motion that it will be passed.

SIR E. H. WITTENOOM (North): I must admit I was rather surprised at the action taken by the Minister for Education in this connection; at the same time I feel it was done with the best intention. There was never in his mind, I am confident, any intention to curtail education; but the action was taken in his position as Treasurer. He evidently thought there were certain classes of people who were in a position

to pay for the education of their children beyond a certain age. That he made a mistake, I think I am prepared to admit. His action was uncalled for, seeing that the educational system of the country is giving universal satisfaction. I am one of those who think elementary education should not be encumbered with too many subjects, but that children of 14 years of age should be well-grounded and should then take up that course which they intend to pursue in life, and should concentrate their attention on such subjects. I was totally unprepared for the educational proposals which the Minister for Education submitted; proposals which will cost the country a great deal of money, and the only satisfaction about them is that the Government is prepared to find the means for carrying these proposals out. I am not in accord with the proposals themselves, but I am in accord with the intention; still I think the intention is in the wrong direction. My opinion is now, and has been for a long time, that any future development in our educational system should be in the line of endeavouring to educate our young people to make the best use of the land at our disposal. Too many facilities are given to learn methods connected with cities—clerical work and business work—and no facilities are given to enable young people to fit themselves to go on the land. This State will have to depend on agriculture and horticulture and the development of the land; therefore it seems to me the proper thing to do under the circumstances is to give every facility to our young people to learn how to cultivate the land. We should have experimental farms and places of that kind, what we may call agricultural colleges, combined with experimental farms if you like. But in these agricultural colleges the whole elementary work of farming should be taught, from the commonest portion to the highest, so that any person who has sons, and these sons having obtained education at the ordinary schools up to 14 years of age, would know where the sons could acquire knowledge for two or three years to fit them to go on the land. I am sure there are hundreds of people in this State and in other parts of the world who, if they knew of an institution of this kind, would readily send their children here

and afterwards provide them with the necessary funds to acquire holdings of their own as soon as they had the experience to work the land. We can easily understand, those of us who are fathers, that young men will not be provided with the means of acquiring farms unless they have the necessary experience. Although the Government are prepared to make a present of 160 acres of land, and a great deal more, on easy terms to new comers, it is no good sending young men on to the land unless they know how to work it. The first question asked is, where can a boy learn? No one can point out where he can learn. No good farmer will have a jackaroo, because he is a nuisance, or a farmer may take a jackaroo for what can be got out of him. It behoves the Government to establish some institution where a boy, having received his elementary education at a primary school or secondary school, can learn how to cultivate land; therefore I am glad the Government has come down with proposals for concentrated schools and central schools; but I think it is wrong in the direction indicated, because there are few children who will attend these schools. I think everybody must see the absolute necessity for institutions of the kind I have mentioned in Western Australia, established on proper lines, where a boy can be taught ploughing, reaping, harrowing, the shoeing of a horse, and so on; but it is impossible to make an institution of that kind pay. I think under these circumstances, if the Government turns its attention to do something in that direction, instead of on the lines suggested, it will earn the thanks of the whole community, and everybody will then congratulate the Treasurer on having brought forward his proposals.

**THE COLONIAL SECRETARY**  
(Hon. J. D. Connolly): I do not think it is necessary that I should say very much on this motion; it has been fully debated in another place, and the Minister for Education, who holds a seat in another place, has gone into the question very fully and explained exactly the intentions of the Government. In regard to the regulations and also the intentions of the Government on the education question generally, I think we are all

agreed on the great value of free education, and it is not the intention, as I think members know by this time, and never was the intention of the Government, to curtail the privileges in any way. I think the House, to a certain extent, has taken a wrong view of the question. Members seem to think these regulations have been adopted by the Minister for Education more from a Treasurer's point of view than from that of Minister for Education. Naturally, as Treasurer, he had his eye on the saving that might be effected in this direction, a saving which would not amount to many thousands a year; but it was rather to stop the abuse that had grown up under the present system than the saving of a little money, or curtailing the privileges of free education in any way, that the Treasurer submitted the proposals. Members would be much surprised indeed if they knew the names of the people who send their children to such schools as the James Street school, to learn the subjects that are taught only in secondary schools; and it was to stop the abuse that has to some extent grown up in that direction, and not for the purpose of curtailing the privileges of free education or for the saving that might be effected, that the Treasurer framed these regulations. It has been said by some members that our educational system does not compare favourably with that in other parts of the world, at any rate with the educational systems in other parts of Australia. I do not think that such is the case at all. I think we have a very good educational system indeed; and it is certainly not the intention of the Government to curtail the system in any way. The fees provided by the regulations are the same as those in force in other States; in fact the fees are much higher in some places. In New South Wales children have to be paid for, right from the beginning, 3d. per week up to a maximum of 1s. per week. Where there are more than four children from one family the maximum is 1s. In Tasmania children are charged 9d. a week, and 7d. per week for two of one family, 6d. a week where there are three of a family going to the school, and 4d. for every additional child of the same family, with a reduction of 3d. a week to poor children. In Victoria no fees are

charged, except for extra subjects, such as Latin, French, German, geometry, euclid, shorthand, typewriting, book-keeping, and manual training. For Latin, French, and German, 1s. per week per subject is charged, for shorthand and typewriting 6d. per week, for bookkeeping 3d. per week, and for manual training 2d. a week is charged. All these subjects are taught here perhaps in such schools as James Street, with the exception it may be of German. This regulation is only really arriving at the same thing as is in force in Victoria to-day, and that is charging for extra subjects, or in other words making the people who can well afford to do so pay for their children learning those subjects. [Interjection by HON. W. KINGSMILL.] It is not the intention of the Government to go back. This is only done to check an abuse that has grown up. There is also this to be said, that we are certainly expending more per pupil in educating our children than they do in any other State. We have built the whole of our schools with Government funds, whereas in the other States schools are to a large extent built by the people themselves.

HON. G. RANDELL: We have a large new population coming in.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I am only just pointing out the difference for the information of members. In New South Wales there is a grant of not more than £45 for less than 15 children, and not more than £60 for less than 15. In Victoria parents provide the building if there is a small school wanted for less than 20 children.

HON. W. KINGSMILL: It is a very shocking state of affairs.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: In exceptional cases the department pays part of the cost. In South Australia, if there are less than 20 children half the cost of the building, not exceeding £75, is granted, and rent is paid for the building. In Queensland, if there is an average attendance of over 30, I think it is, in the State school, the Government will provide four-fifths of the cost of the buildings, whilst in the case of a provisional school with an average attendance of 15 or between 15 and 30 the people have to build the school entirely at their own expense. In a large number

of schools the teachers may have to devote considerable time to teaching one or two scholars on higher subjects, to the detriment of the great bulk of the pupils. The regulations which have been gazetted are not at all severe. Mr. Kingsmill thinks they would act very harshly on poor children. Let me say they specially provide for cases where people are not in a position to pay. Such people need only say so, and their children will be educated free. I am only pointing that out to show what is the intention of the regulation, namely to stop a certain abuse that has grown up. Again, it was mentioned by Mr. Kingsmill that the regulations act harshly on boys and girls in the country who have not had the opportunity of going to school until attaining a greater age than that at which the average child is able to go to school. That is to say a child may not be able to go to school when 11 or 12 years, not having an opportunity. [Interjection by HON. G. RANDELL.] Or even older than that. The regulations specially provide for the case where a pupil has not had the opportunity of going to school.

HON. W. KINGSMILL: I did not say anything about not having an opportunity.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I understood the hon. member to say that. The regulation provides for such cases. The Minister for Education in a statement in another place said:—

I think we might still farther amend the regulations by providing that children passing the sixth standard examination at or before the age of fourteen may remain at school, without payment of fees, up to the age of sixteen.

That of course is to provide in the case of a smart boy for his getting a premium for his smartness. That is the boy we wish to keep at school. The regulation is to provide for the smart boy to remain in school, rather than for keeping at school the dull boy whose parents are well able to afford to pay for him. The Minister also said:—

I propose to immediately provide that certain schools, namely, the Perth boys' and girls', Fremantle boys' and girls', Kalgoorlie mixed, shall be central schools, at which children, by merit, can receive advanced education. Schools in other centres will be made central schools as occasion requires,



This amounts to the establishment of senior classes in favourably situated primary schools, which children on passing the sixth standard before the age of fourteen may attend free to the age of sixteen.

He contends that these central schools will be a very much cheaper way of providing an education for these children than the system now existing of providing a teacher for teaching these higher subjects to one or two children. As I said in the beginning, I do not think it is at all necessary for me to go any farther into this question. The intentions of the Government have been made quite clear in another place. These regulations are not made of cast-iron. If they are found unworkable or to act harshly on anyone they can be amended. The Government had no idea and no intention of being niggardly or mean, or to in any way try to curtail the benefits of free education. It is the intention to extend that, and to extend it in a direction which I think will be appreciated by the country generally. I quite agree with Sir Edward Wittenoom when he states that what is wanted in this country is more of education fitting children for country life, or technical education, so that children may earn their living by other means than by becoming clerks or by obtaining appointments of that sort.

**HON. J. W. LANGSFORD** (in reply as mover) : It is generally considered that the mover of a motion has the opportunity of replying to arguments that have been adduced against the motion submitted to the House. I shall not take up much time in replying to the arguments against the present motion, because there has been a chorus I think of disapproval by the House in regard to these regulations. No other proposal of the Government has received such severe criticism not only of the Press but of the public generally and of this House as this proposal to amend the regulations regarding our primary education. The proposal itself was, I am convinced, opposed to the true spirit of education, and to me it was in the first instance symptomatic. I thought that if this was the opinion of the Moore Ministry on the question of education, the sooner we brought them to their bearings the better, because if they

commenced to economise in the primary departments of our educational system there was small hope for any advance elsewhere. But since the searchlight of public criticism has been brought to bear on those regulations we have been told that they are a part only of the Government proposals in regard to education. If the action of the Government has been misinterpreted in regard to its educational proposals, it is entirely responsible for that. We have been told this is only part of a greater scheme that is to take effect in the future, that we shall endeavour to secure economy in one direction that we may spend in another. I think it would have been far preferable if the Government had waited until it had discovered what its education proposals really were before commencing a patchwork system of this kind. I do not know whether this great advance in secondary education was even thought of when these regulations were first introduced. Certainly the country heard nothing of them until a criticism of these regulations was made in the Press and by the public generally, and then was brought to light an elaborate system of secondary education which the Government had carefully considered. If the action of the Government is misinterpreted in this direction or is misunderstood, it alone I think is responsible for that. From the debate on this motion and the light that has been thrown on the education question, the people are quite decided in their own minds that as far as primary education is concerned it shall be free, and the older the age perhaps the better. I shall not go over any of the ground in regard to the statistics which the Colonial Secretary has introduced to-night. There is an answer to every statement he has made. I am quite satisfied with the support which this motion has received from the country members. It was thought that the regulations aimed principally at the town schools. If this proposal is to be brought into force, the children that will suffer most are those in the country schools, and I am glad to see that a stand was taken by those who represent country provinces. I am not anxious to have any formal motion passed by this House. I am quite content with the

expression of opinion which has been given utterance to. I feel convinced that the regulations would never have been enforced, and that probably in the *Education Circular* submitted to teachers each month some mention will be made of the fact that the regulations are suspended pending a complete scheme which the Government intends to submit to this House and the country. I hope that when next it makes an excursion into the realms of education it will be with a determination to take a step forward instead of a step backward. Having obtained an expression of opinion and I think unanimous opinion from the House on this question, I beg, with permission of the House, to withdraw the motion.

Motion by leave withdrawn.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 8-46 o'clock, until the next day.

#### POLICE OFFENCES BILL INQUIRY, EXTENSION.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. N. Keenan) moved that the time for bringing up the report of the select committee appointed to inquire into the Police Offences Bill be extended for four weeks.

MR. JOHNSON, before agreeing to the extension, asked for assurance that the report would be forthcoming at the end of this term. How many sittings of the committee had been held, and what number of witnesses were examined, since the previous extension of the time was granted?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The committee had one meeting every week except last week, when he was absent. There was a meeting fixed for this week. No witnesses had been examined so far, because the committee had not completed the Bill itself. When the Bill was completed, they would be prepared to examine witnesses if necessary.

Question passed.

#### BILL—STOCK DISEASES ACT AMENDMENT.

##### COUNCIL'S AMENDMENT.

One amendment made by the Legislative Council was now considered in Committee, and agreed to; a message accordingly returned to the Council.

#### BILL—LAND ACT AMENDMENT. IN COMMITTEE.

Resumed from the previous Thursday; MR. ILLINGWORTH in the Chair, the PREMIER in charge of the Bill.

##### Clause 16—Amendment of Section 3:

THE PREMIER: The section in the principal Act provided that if any lease, license, or occupation certificate under the Act was lodged, a duplicate might be issued on payment of 5s. In some cases it entailed great expense to make out a duplicate parchment. The Government asked that power might be given to the Minister to provide for the charge by regulation instead of a fixed charge. In some cases it was not worth more than 1s. to give a certificate; in another case it might be worth a pound.

### Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 25th September, 1906.

	PAGE
Police Offences Bill Inquiry, Extension	1807
Bills: Stock Diseases Act Amendment, Council's Amendment	1807
Land Act Amendment, Com. resumed; Limit to size of holding, Mr. Bath's proposal as to lease renewal, progress	1807
Mines Regulation, Com. resumed; height of slopes discussed, progress	1817

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 4-30 o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS.

#### PAPER PRESENTED.

By the PREMIER: Report of the Comptroller General of Prisons for 1905.