THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: They are one and the same question.

HON. M. L. MOSS: I move that the debate be adjourned for one week.

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

Ayes	16
Noes	9
Majority for	7

AYES.	NOES.
Hon. T. F. O. Brimage	Hon. G. Bellingham
Hon. E. M. Clarke	Hon. J. D. Connolly
Hon. F. Connor	Hon. J. M. Drew
Hon. F. Hamersley	Hon. J. T. Glowrey
Hon. S. J. Haynes	Hon. J. W. Hackett
Hon. W. Kingsmill	Hon R. Laurie
Hon. J. W. Langsford	Hon. C. A. Piesse
Hon. W. T. Loton	Hon. Sir E. Wittenoom
Hon. W. Maley	Hon. W. Oats (*Teller*).
Hon. E. McLarty	
Hon. M. L. Moss	
Hon. G. Randell	
Hon. R. F. Sholl	
Hon. C. Sommers	
Hon. J. W. Wright	
Hon. W. Patrick (*Teller*).	

Motion thus passed, the debate adjourned.

BILL—EVIDENCE.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I must again ask the House to agree to the farther postponement of this order until this day week, because if certain Bills are not passed in another place, there may be necessity to delete or extend the schedule to this Bill.

Motion passed, the order for Committee postponed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 6·27 o'clock, until the next day.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 2nd October, 1906.

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

PRAYERS.

PETITION—EDUCATION REGULATIONS.

MR. LAYMAN presented a petition signed by 24 residents of Greenbushes, in opposition to the amended Education Regulations (school fees).

Petition received and read.

PRIVILEGE — NEWSPAPER COMMENTS ON AN INQUIRY.

MR. T. WALKER (Kanowna): I desire to draw the attention of the Government to certain comments that appear in to-day's *Daily News* on a case that is *sub judice*, and which I think concerns the privileges of this House, with a view of asking the Government if they intend to take any steps in the matter. As members well know, the report of the Commission appointed on the authority of the Government to inquire into the allegations made by the member for North Fremantle has not yet reported to this House or to the Government. It is true the evidence has been taken, but the *Daily News* comments in this fashion:—

> There can be no question that the Royal Commission, which yesterday concluded its investigations into Mr. Bolton's sensational charges against railway officials, has resulted in a complete and unqualified vindication of the persons accused. The charges made have been proved to be utterly groundless.

That is in one article. It is followed by another, and a whole column is devoted to the question. Amongst other things this is said:—

> Now what evidence has Mr. Bolton furnished in support of those grave charges? Absolutely none. Indeed, the utter breakdown of his whole case has been positively ludicrous.

It goes on to say, after making comments of a similar nature, that the only person having a serious charge resting on him is Mr. Bolton, and he can only expiate the serious offence of which he has been guilty by a full and unqualified withdrawal and an apology to Parliament and the country. I do not suppose the Judge is at all likely to be influenced by comments of that kind, but this is a matter with which the House has yet to deal. We have not the evidence before us, but the public mind may be influenced by comments of that kind. I think that the precedent is a serious one, and considerably interferes with the privileges of the Assembly. I would like to know if under the circumstances the Government intend to take any action.

The PREMIER (Hon. N. J. Moore): In reply to the member for Kanowna, my attention has only just been drawn to the paragraph referred to. I take it, we are all agreed that it is very regrettable that any comments whatever should be made on a case which is practically at the present time *sub judice*. We recognise that while these comments may have had an effect on a jury, they are not likely to have any possible effect on the Judge of the Supreme Court who is acting as Commissioner.

Mr. Scaddan: It is a precedent.

The PREMIER: This is a matter which really more largely concerns the House than the Government. I take it that Standing Order 139 to a very large degree would deal with the case that has been brought under notice, and that Standing Order provides:—

> Any member complaining to the House of a statement in a newspaper as a breach of privilege shall produce a copy of the newspaper containing the statement in question, and be prepared to give the name of the printer and publisher, and also submit a substantive motion declaring the person in question to have been guilty of contempt.

I can only say, without giving the matter farther consideration, that I am not prepared to state what action the Government are prepared to take at the present moment; but I consider this is a question which really more affects the privileges of the House.

Mr. Walker: Which you should protect.

The PREMIER: I shall be prepared to give consideration to any motion the hon. member may bring forward.

Mr. WALKER: I am not prepared to carry the matter farther this evening, but if the Premier will think over the matter between now and to-morrow I may be prepared to go farther. I think this is a matter that concerns the Government as much as the House, and as the Leader of the Government should be the protector of the privileges of the Assembly, it is more a matter for him to take in hand than a private member. When the privileges of the House are assailed, it is for the Leader of the House to take action.

The PREMIER: The hon. member is aware the matter has only just been brought under my notice. It is necessary in such an important matter that some consideration should be given to it.

Mr. Walker: Quite so.

BILL—AGRICULTURAL BANK.

CONSOLIDATION AND AMENDMENT.

SECOND READING.

Debate resumed from the 27th September.

Mr. M. F. TROY (Mount Magnet): In connection with this measure which has been introduced by the Honorary Minister (Mr. Mitchell) my remarks must necessarily be brief, because the representation of my constituency does not bring me in touch with the matter which is dealt with in the Bill; therefore I shall leave a larger portion of criticism of the measure to members who represent those who will be affected by the Bill. I congratulate the Honorary Minister on the able way the Bill was introduced and on the explanation he gave of the details of the measure. I believe it is the hon. member's first Bill, and I have again to express my appreciation of the manner in which it was introduced. If the Bill does that which has been promised by the Honorary Minister, it will go a very long way towards expediting land settlement in the State. I believe the Bill will give greater facilities and encouragement to people desirous of settling in the State than any other measure introduced up to the

present time. There are many persons in the State who would settle on the land, but they are prohibited from doing so and making homes for themselves because they have not the necessary cash with which to make a start. And if the measure is administered as the mover apparently intends, that objection to land settlement will be removed. The Bill provides that when advances are made the interests of the State will be protected, in that no moneys will be advanced without security. Payments to the settlers will be made on results, and no person will be able to secure money without showing some reason for borrowing. The progress payments will give the settler an opportunity of clearing his land and putting in a crop. I object to the provision for the appointment of trustees. Two trustees are to be appointed for three years, but the managing trustee is to have a permanent appointment, and the Bill provides that the appointment shall be given to the present manager of the bank. Now that gentleman may be an ideal manager, but there is no reason why we should provide this position for him when more competent managers may be obtainable. With all due respect to that gentleman, against whom I know nothing, I think it would be advisable to make his appointment also for three years; because as time goes on we may get more competent persons than he to occupy the position. And since the Bill provides that the two other trustees shall be appointed for three years only, I think the same provision should apply to the head trustee. Again, provision is made for notifying by advertisement in the daily papers the intention to redeem bonds. Many bondholders may not see the daily papers. Some may be absent from the State, and the advertisements may escape the notice of many who live in the State. I think the bondholders should be notified in the ordinary way, by post, to the effect that the trustees intend to redeem certain bonds on a given date. I believe in the provision for raising money by bonds, and consider it will prevent the need for trenching on loan funds or on revenue. I believe that sufficient moneys will be raised by this means to carry on all the operations of the bank. One clause is likely to operate harshly, for it provides that advances may be made for ringbarking, clearing, fencing, draining, and water conservation only. I think that advances should be made for cultivating also; because although ringbarking, clearing, etcetera, are very necessary, it is necessary also that the ground should be ploughed. And other advances should be made to the settler for the purpose of buying machinery, making due allowance for its depreciation; also for cultivating, to enable the farmer to plough land and put in a crop. In many parts of the Eastern Districts in the Minister's own electorate, I know farmers who have to pay other farmers in the locality to plough the land and put in a crop; and the Agricultural Bank might go farther than it goes now by making advances to settlers for the purpose of paying other persons to put in crops, thus giving the borrower a great and direct encouragement. The next clause provides that if money is borrowed, say for the purpose of fencing or of providing water, and is put to any other use, the manager of the bank may demand the return of the money, and in default of repayment take possession of the property. I think that is a very harsh clause, which will work badly. A person may borrow for the purpose of water conservation. The season may be very dry, and he will borrow to sink a dam or a well; but just as he receives the money there may be a plentiful fall of rain, and he may find it advisable to utilise the money for the purchase of stock, the erection of fences, or for some other work.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: He has only to ask permission.

MR. TROY: Yes; but the power of refusing is not in the Minister but in the manager of the bank; and I think if the power should be in anyone it should be in the Minister, because the bank manager will necessarily desire to run the institution on strictly commercial lines, and will not give the same facilities and encouragement as would be granted by the Minister.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: The power will be in the board.

MR. TROY: The board will, like the manager, endeavour to run the bank on commercial lines, so as to make it pay. I have no doubt the Minister would show

far more sympathy with the settler than would the board or the manager. Advances will be made also for discharging any mortgage already existing on a holding. I think advances should be made for discharging any other liability also. Take the case of a settler who has been struggling before the Bill comes into operation. He may owe money for machinery; he may owe the storekeeper for goods supplied whilst opening up the property; and I think, provided he has security—and of course the money will not be advanced unless he has—he might be accommodated in order to pay off such liabilities. That operation would be as easy as lending him money to pay off a mortgage. There is the farther consideration that a settler indebted to a storekeeper or an implement merchant has to pay 10 per cent. per annum on the amount due; and if he can secure from the Agricultural Bank an advance to pay off that liability, his interest is at once reduced to five per cent., and he will have to pay the bank just half as much as he was paying the storekeeper or the agricultural implement merchant. Besides advancing money to pay off mortgages, advances should be given to pay off any liability, provided that the farmer can give ample security. It is a good idea to limit the advance to £500 in the majority of cases, though more than £500 may be lent in specific instances. I think £500 is all sufficient for the struggling settler, who, if he can get an advance to that amount, will be able to carry on until he has a crop in or gets a fair footing. Advances to £1,000 and over I do not agree with, because people who want those advances are generally those operating on a large scale, who can borrow from institutions which will not assist the small struggling farmer. And since the maximum is £500, there will be more money spread amongst a large number of people and utilised in agricultural operations. Much has been left for regulations to be made under the measure. The Bill seems now to be very liberal; and I hope the regulations will be just as liberal, and will not contain anything to nullify the good intentions of the Bill. I have great pleasure in supporting the second reading, and desire to express my appreciation of the Bill as it stands.

MR. G. S. F. COWCHER (Williams): What is meant by "clearing"? Does it include the extirpation of blackboys? The Bill provides that advances may be made for ringbarking and clearing.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: I will explain that clause in Committee.

MR. COWCHER: I congratulate the Minister on this Bill, which I think is a step in the right direction. So far as I know, it will give the manager of the bank more direct power to make advances. Hitherto there has been delay in obtaining advances, not through the fault of the manager, but through the fault of the Act. People who go on the land let contracts for clearing in order that they may get a crop; and many have been unable to do that owing to inability to buy machinery and pay the contractors. The land has had to stand over till another season. The Act will give opportunity for advances to be made straight away, so that people will get the money when they need it. Generally speaking, I support the Bill. When it goes into Committee I will speak on a few other clauses.

MR. P. STONE (Greenough): I wish to support the second reading. In some respects the Bill does not go far enough to suit me, and I think several amendments should be made in Committee. The Agricultural Bank has no doubt in the past done very good work in certain parts of the State. In other parts it has not given any assistance, or has not satisfied the people by whom assistance was expected. From my experience, and from all I can gather about the practice of the bank, it is a one-sided concern.

MR. TAYLOR: In what way?

MR. STONE: It accommodates certain people in preference to others who have the same right to assistance. Cases have come under my notice which I may point out in Committee, when I should like to see several amendments made. I wish to support the second reading, and in Committee we can put the Bill into shape.

MR. G. TAYLOR (Mt. Margaret): I have no desire to speak at any length on the second reading of the measure. I content myself by reserving any criticism of the measure for the Committee stage,

but I cannot let this opportunity pass without protesting against members on the Government side, or on any side of the House, making disparaging remarks on the management of the Agricultural Bank. From all I can gather, from the farmers of this State, those who have had business with the bank, it has been a most satisfactory institution; and I want to compliment the manager on the success with which he has conducted the business of the bank without any loss to the State, and with great advantage to the farmers and those whom the bank was intended for in Western Australia. I am surprised to hear a member representing an agricultural centre making statements against the institution.

MR. COWCHER: I made the statements against the Bill.

MR. TAYLOR: I was directing my remarks against the member for Greenough. The member said this was a one-sided measure.

MR. STONE: I am prepared to show that.

MR. TAYLOR: I do not believe in statements being made against persons who are not in this Chamber, unless those statements are backed up by facts. I can understand in a heated discussion a member making a statement against someone who is not present without the statement being supported by documentary evidence. But I think it is unfair that a charge should be made against an institution which I am confident will bear the strictest possible scrutiny. That is uppermost in my mind, and I must protest against such an attitude in this House.

MR. F. ILLINGWORTH (West Perth): When the first Agricultural Bank Bill was introduced I took a very strong stand against the measure altogether, for I believed at that time we were embarking upon a course which would lead to a heavy loss to the State. I believe to-day that but for success in securing an unusually capable manager, that loss would have occurred. I think we cannot give too much tribute to the manager of the bank for the work he has done in the past. I am sure he has done it conscientiously and in a most successful manner. It is now proposed to extend the utility of the bank, and I have every pleasure in supporting the Bill knowing that the bank has been established on lines which have proved useful to the farmers and the general public of the State. I am glad the extension is to be made and that care is also to be taken. My object in rising was to give my testimony to the way in which the manager of the bank has conducted the institution. I have watched the bank with anxiety from its inception, but I have been relieved of that anxiety by the able manner in which the bank has been conducted by the manager. I hope the two additional trustees will not interfere with the power of the manager. I hope his influence will predominate in the institution still, I believe it will, and I hope the trustees will be helpful to the manager and relieve him of much routine work which he has to undertake, but that they will not interfere with the principle of the bank. I am glad it is the intention of the Bill to keep advances down to £500. I think the advances should be made as fully and widely as they can be in view of the fact that the bank has been so great a success, and that it is intended to follow on in the same lines as in the past. I have great pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill.

MR. H. CARSON (Geraldton): I desire to congratulate the Government on introducing this measure. It is much more liberal than the previous one, and I would like to congratulate the Honorary Minister (Mr. Mitchell) who introduced it. I am glad he is in charge of this department, because he is an enthusiast and knows by practical experience what can be done on the land. I feel sure this measure will do much to still develop our great country. The previous measure helped to settle many people on their holdings, and to obtain returns at an early period. I like the idea of trustees, because no matter how much ability the manager may have shown in the conduct of the bank, and undoubtedly he has done good work, he above all men should be pleased to have assistance in this direction. The member for Mount Margaret was rather severe in his criticism of the member for Greenough, but as far as I can understand the member for Greenough knows of cases where the manager of the bank has not dealt as liberally as

he might have done with holders in the Northern portion of the State.

Mr. Taylor: Why not specify cases then?

Mr. CARSON: Not at this stage.

Mr. Taylor: Yes. If you make a charge you should back it up.

Mr. CARSON: The manager of the bank has more than a fair share of the work to do, and he will be glad of the assistance of the two trustees in the conduct of the bank. I hope the measure will be carried. I think something must be done in Committee to amend it, but the measure will assist in developing the State.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

Mr. Illingworth in the Chair; the Honorary Minister (Mr. Mitchell) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 4—agreed to.

Clause 5—Appointment of trustees:

Mr. STONE moved an amendment, that in line 2 of Subclause 1 the word "Governor" be struck out and "Parliament" inserted in lieu.

The HONORARY MINISTER (Mr. Mitchell): It would be cumbersome to appeal to Parliament to appoint trustees, and would cause unnecessary delay. It would be an unusual proceeding also. The appointment of trustees and officers of the bank was generally left in the hands of the Government.

Mr. TAYLOR: If the amendment were carried this would be the only statute containing such a provision. The Governor meant the Government of the day, and the Government was responsible to Parliament. So far as the trustees were concerned he would like to have some idea of how the Government intended to select these officers.

Mr. WALKER: The member for Greenough was surely not in earnest. What was a Government for but to take the responsibility for its conduct, and if Parliament relieved the Government of its responsibility, why have a Government at all? Let the Government make the appointments, and if the member did not like those appointments he could move that the Government be turned out of office.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. TAYLOR: The Bill was only introduced last week. There were some 32 or 33 Bills on the file, and it was almost impossible for members to give that careful study to the measures brought down at one sitting of the House and moved at the next, and then to go straight into Committee. The Government should give members an opportunity of thoroughly digesting the measure so that they would be in a position to criticise it. Whilst he had no desire to prevent the passage of the measure, and indeed he wished to help the Minister, he would like the hon. gentleman to give some opportunity for discussion. Subclause 2 said that one of the trustees should be appointed by the Governor as managing trustee. Whilst he had every confidence in the manager of the bank, he would like the Minister to give some idea of what was proposed.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The manager of the bank at present in office was a permanent official, and it was necessary that he should be provided with an appointment. It was necessary that we should have three trustees, and advisable that one should be the managing trustee. He took it there was no more suitable man in the State than the present manager (Mr. Paterson) to become manager. [Mr. Taylor: That was right.] With regard to the other trustees it was proposed to secure the services of practical men who would understand fully the value of the work to be done on the land, and would know something of the conditions applying in the various and varying parts of the State.

Mr. TROY: The member for Greenough was taken to task by the member for Mount Margaret because he said something not altogether favourable to the present occupant of the office referred to. Any member of the Assembly had a perfect right to criticise any individual, if he did not hold with him. Probably the hon. member had every reason for it. A few months ago the hon. member moved for a committee to be appointed to go into Agricultural Bank matters, because he was not satisfied with the

condition of affairs which obtained, and he (Mr. Troy) believed that the Minister promised this Bill and that he would endeavour to fix matters up. The hon. member said he was not satisfied with it, and he had every right to raise the same objection as he had done to-day.

MR. SCADDAN: The hon. member was not the only one who had heard complaints against the bank. That was not the fault of the manager but of the Act.

MR. TROY: That might be, or it might be the fault of the manager. He had not had the pleasure of making the manager's acquaintance. The manager should be appointed only for a term of three years, the same as the others.

THE PREMIER: That officer was appointed now, and we had to find some position for him.

MR. TROY Later on we provided a salary for him.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: He had that now.

MR. JOHNSON: Making the period of the appointment of the manager three years would be worse than the present Bill specified, because the measure stated he might be appointed by the Governor-in-Council, and seeing he was appointed by the Governor, the Governor could remove him.

THE PREMIER: The gentleman proposed to be appointed as manager was already a civil servant and acted in the capacity of manager of the Agricultural Bank. It seemed to him the only complaint that had been made by any member against the manager of the bank was really that he was too conservative. That conservatism was in the interests of the State.

MR. TAYLOR: The hon. member said unfair treatment to some part of the State.

THE PREMIER: Many complaints against the manager of the bank had been received by him, but the principal cause of complaint was that the advances had not been as liberal as the applicants could wish. One knew the member for Greenough considered he had some cause for complaint.

MR. STONE: Never in his life had he asked the manager for any favour.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member was under the impression that the manager was more inclined to make advances in that particular part of the State where the rainfall was more regular than in the particular district he referred to. However, we recognised that Mr. Paterson was a practical man, a farmer with a thorough knowledge of the districts, and he felt sure that in recommending him for the appointment of managing trustee the interests of the State would be served.

MR. STONE: Some four years ago he asked for a return to Parliament showing where the money was going and who was getting it. He did not find who was getting it, but he found out where it was going. A large amount went down south, whilst north of Gingin there had not been £50 advanced. The manager told him that any information required would be readily given if he (Mr. Stone) would not move for it in Parliament, and not only that, but if there was anyone he could recommend that had a deserving case he (the manager) would be pleased to give the accommodation asked. That was what he (Mr. Stone) complained of. He protested in regard to members going cap-in-hand to the manager in relation to getting accommodation. He had asked for certain returns, and some members had asked him the reason for that request. There was nothing personal between Mr. Paterson and himself. He had never asked Mr. Paterson for a farthing in his life; but the district he represented had not received that fair play it was entitled to. Parliament should have the power to elect managers and trustees as it thought fit. He thought that if a committee were appointed to go through the book, that would show who was getting the money and where the money was going.

MR. COWCHER: There had been lots of complaints, but he had always found that the manager of the bank treated him in a fair and honourable way. Once Mr. Paterson said he would not give a thing, he would not give it. It was only for a representative to put his case before him, and in every case he said, "I am here as manager; I am responsible to Parliament and the Government, and have to do my duty." The manager had never favoured one man in his district to his knowledge.

THE PREMIER: As to members of Parliament approaching the manager of the bank, the manager most strongly protested.

MR. TAYLOR: They had no chance. He tried him, and it was no use.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Paterson was very anxious that in the case of this Bill there should be no question of any political influence being brought to bear upon any question of loans. It placed the manager of the bank in a most invidious position because he did not know that agentleman whom he refused a loan to-day might not be a Minister to-morrow. Consequently it was just as well to keep the institution as far as possible from any sign of political influence. He knew that no one desired more than the manager to keep clear of members of Parliament.

MR. JOHNSON: A member was perfectly justified in representing some particular grievance or some particular point of difference between the manager and a constituent.

MR. TAYLOR: It went through the Minister, and not the manager.

MR. JOHNSON: Take the Commissioner of Railways. Very often members had to go and see him.

MR. TAYLOR: The Act prevented it.

MR. JOHNSON: No; neither did he think that anybody could take very strong exception to it. He rose particularly to take very strong exception to the remark of the member for Greenough. During the time he was Minister he came into contact with the manager of the Agricultural Bank on numerous occasions. The manager did a service at that time in connection with the Midland Railway valuations, and he knew the hard work and the great effort the manager put forward on that occasion. As the member for West Perth had pointed out, the success of that venture was absolutely due to the fact that we were successful in getting a good manager. The fact that there had been no losses showed that it had been successful, and it was a sufficient reply to the statement made by the member for Greenough.

MR. STONE: The statement he had made could not be combated by that assertion.

MR. WALKER: If there was any charge against the manager of the Agricultural Bank, the hon. member should bring it before the House and have it debated and discussed on its merits. He had no doubt that a gentleman in that responsible position would have a number of enemies. Almost every man who was refused a loan felt that he was under a sort of grievance, and the man who refused him from whatsoever cause was bound to be unjustly judged. Having some knowledge of the manager of the bank, one felt confident that he was an upright and honourable man, who would not be guilty of unfair conduct towards anybody if a matter was properly placed before him. The member for Greenough had made a charge that he was solicited not to bring a certain matter before the House. Perhaps the hon. member was wise in not doing so if the manager of the bank had placed sufficient facts before him to convince the hon. member, before he made an unwise step, that he was in error.

MR. STONE: There was no error. The information desired was received. A quarter of a million had been mopped up, and persons in the North had not received assistance.

MR. WALKER: Then apparently the hon. member was only suffering from disappointment, and there was no need for farther debate on the matter. Any charges made against Mr. Paterson should be dealt with fairly and squarely on a motion brought forward by the hon. member, and on the hon. member producing proofs; but because there was some little neglect perhaps or oversight of the Northern districts, it was no reason why we should take out of the hands of the Government the responsibility and submit it to the Chamber.

MR. STONE: This was to be an appointment for life, during the Governor's pleasure.

MR. WALKER: Being a civil servant, the manager of the bank could be removed. No new step was taken; we merely made Mr. Paterson an officer under this Bill as he was an officer under the present Act.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: The Bill was designed to meet the case referred to by Mr. Stone. It was proposed to appoint three trustees. Mr. Paterson was an absolutely fair man and had dealt with the funds of the bank in

an absolutely fair way. It was expected that he would make a fair valuation of the properties submitted as security. It could not be otherwise. If the people to whom Mr. Stone referred——

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must be spoken of as the member for Greenough.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: It was only right that the manager should refuse any application where he thought the security unsuitable. The hon. member said that members of Parliament arranged loans for their constituents; but not much harm was done. In fact it was regrettable that every member had not been exceedingly active in getting his constituents to make use of the funds of the bank. He (the Minister) had done his best to get money into his district, and the good done there was what the member for Greenough referred to in saying that the money provided by the bank had been spent in districts other than the North. The three trustees would arrive at a conclusion in each case that would be satisfactory, and the trouble the hon. member referred to would be abolished.

MR. SCADDAN: One would imagine that there had never been any complaints against the administration of the bank. He had heard numerous complaints. It was supposed that the Agricultural Bank was founded to assist the poor man, but he could point out one instance where anything but a poor man had received assistance from the bank, and he could point out numerous instances where poor men had been unable to obtain assistance.

MR. TAYLOR: Probably they could give no security.

MR. SCADDAN: Their security was their improvements, and in many cases a partly-erected fence. If a man had a ring fence of three wires the bank would not consider it an improvement. That was the fault of the Act, no doubt. In one instance a man came out here and spent £400 in the Northam district. That man had £1,000 lying to his credit in England, but he preferred to risk the expenditure of £1,000 from the State's funds through the Agricultural Bank, rather than invest his own money, and the bank advanced that man £1,000. On the other hand, the poor man with his land partly cleared and with a fence sufficient to keep out all the stock likely to be running about, could not obtain assistance for farther clearing. The assistance the bank would give that man would be £100, of which £80 would be required to be spent on erecting a six-wire fence that would be useless to the settler. There was some justification for the complaints against the management of the bank. It was not the manager's fault; it was owing to the Minister telling the manager to be absolutely certain of his investments. The bank should assist the poor man and not the man well able to help himself.

MR. TAYLOR: It was surprising to hear the arguments advanced against the administration of the Act. He protested against the arguments advanced against the manager of the bank. In the case quoted by the member for Ivanhoe the bank was right in advancing money, because the security was good. It was laid down in the Act. If any fault was to be found it was to be found with the Act, which specified that money could only be advanced on improvements. Charges of unfair treatment were different from mere dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction was no charge against the administration. He challenged the member for Greenough to bring forward a motion asking for the appointment of a commission or select committee to inquire into the management of the bank. When the reputation of a gentleman was at stake through innuendos or side issues, the hon. member should make a direct charge and ask the House to deal with it. He (Mr. Taylor) had found the manager an upright and honest man, always anxious to do his duty. If the manager erred, it was on the side of caution, so that the bank would not have bad debts. It was proof of Mr. Paterson's management that during the existence of the bank there was not more than £5 or £7 of a loss.

MR. STONE: But there were no payments for the first five years.

MR. TAYLOR: If the hon. member's constituents made applications for advances and the security was not in accordance with the Act or not sufficient according to the manager to justify an advance, the manager was right in not making the advance.

MR. STONE: Compare the securities with other securities and see.

MR. TAYLOR: The hon. member claimed that the securities in the North were better than the other securities. There was something on which to hang a charge. Let the hon. member bring it before the House and have it investigated; but he (Mr. Taylor) was confident the manager of the bank would come out with clean hands. One was surprised that the member for Guildford who had administered the Railway Department and the Agricultural Bank Act should make the statement he did. The member said that the Commissioner for Railways by Act of Parliament was removed from political influence. According to Section 80 of the Railways Act if a member of Parliament attended a deputation in reference to railway matters, the deputation must be to the Minister, and not to the Commissioner. As the member for Greenough had made statements, and was satisfied that an injustice had been done, he should bring the case before the House, and the House should be in possession of the facts of that case before passing the clause. No matter what charges might be brought the manager of the bank would come out of them right.

MR. STONE was prepared to substantiate the charges he had made. Applications had been made to the bank on many occasions and refused. One particular case was in reference to a property worth £800 or £1,000. The owner wanted a little accommodation to develop, and made application to the bank for £200. After the inspector had made an inspection and recommended that the loan be granted, the manager stated that he would make an advance of £100 on the property. The applicant was willing to take the £100, but he wanted £50 down. After eight or nine months' negotiations, the manager of the bank sent the applicant a cheque for £15, although the bank held as security over £800 worth of property. The applicant sent the cheque for £15 back. In many cases applications had been made to the bank, and had been dragged on for months, and the same persons had been granted advances at once by other financial institutions on precisely the same security.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 6—Incorporation of trustees:

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

BILL—DISTRICT FIRE BRIGADES.

SECOND READING.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. N. Keenan) in moving the second reading said: The Bill which I have the honour to submit to the House for its second reading purposes to make provision for the protection of life and property from fire in all parts of the State which are not covered by any previous legislation, by the establishment of fire brigades. The Fire Brigades Act of 1898 was framed for the principal purpose of providing a central authority to exist in Perth for the governing of fire brigades throughout the State; but the Act in another section applied to Perth in any event, and only to other places after the passing of the Act when such places came under the board and became an integral portion of the system under the board. The establishment of this authority prevented any municipalities which had grown up in various portions of the State, and had instituted fire brigades in their midst, from taking advantage of the provisions of the Act and coming under the central authority. It is a matter for no wonder that that is so. Under the Act of 1898 all contributions were spent at the pleasure of the central authority, and therefore those municipalities which are at a considerable distance from the central authority derived no possible advantage from the expenditure, which would be wholly governed by that body; and the result has been that, except the municipality of Fremantle, which last year or the year before came under the central authority, no other municipality has done so. The position that has obtained in all other municipalities has been most objectionable. They have been called on to support the fire brigades in their districts, and bear the whole cost of such support; and not a penny-piece has been contributed to the upkeep by the fire insurance companies, which in many cases derive a large revenue from the insurances on properties in the municipalities. The object of the Bill

is to enable district fire brigades to be constituted and to be governed by district boards. It empowers and enables an efficient system of government to be provided to carry out the intentions of the Bill. It may be a source of criticism that this Bill will be of use to municipalities, and apparently with the exception which I will point out, of little use to any other part of the State, except communities formed into municipalities. But members will remember that almost every place of importance does become a municipality in the course of time, and at places where there is any large amount of property of an insurable character, and where anything like an efficient fire brigade is constituted outside the services of an elementary character, such places are to be found only in municipalities. I may point out that provision is made in the Bill for services to be rendered by the district boards outside their district, in adjoining districts. I hope the House will see that this provision will meet the case of suburban places which have not been created municipalities, but which would require in the natural order of events the maintenance and protection afforded by fire brigades. In the first place provision is made under the Bill whereby a municipal district to which the Fire Brigades Act of 1898 applies, and which has come under that Act, may, if it so chooses, come under the Bill, and if it does so all the property real and personal attaching to the brigades that are established in those places will be transferred to the new authority created under the Bill. It will enable any place, and Perth and Fremantle are the only places that have adopted the central authority, to reconsider their position, and if they think the Bill affords them an easier and cheaper method of government than the Act of 1898, they can come under the Bill. A fire brigade district is constituted by proclamation, and includes a municipal district or municipal districts or any two or more municipalities; and the object aimed at in that provision is this. In other parts of the State outside Perth and Fremantle, municipalities in some cases may be willing, and I hope will be willing, to combine for constituting a district board in order to save expense or keep down expenses and so minimise the cost of supervision. I hope that will occur in one particular case where the municipalities are divided by very short distances indeed. There are many cases where distances, although considerable to those not used to travel great distances, are very little compared to the large distances we are used to on the goldfields. I would even like to see Coolgardie linked with Kalgoorlie in a Bill of this character. I have pointed out that it is hoped these districts will, by mutual arrangement, comprise more than one municipality, although the municipalities may be separated by a considerable distance. There is power to extend the boundaries of a district, and by that means it will be possible, where the settlement is immediately adjoining a municipality but not a portion of the municipality, to extend the district to include within the purview of the board that portion which may be adjoining the municipality. Power is taken to unite two or more districts where close to one another. In such cases the Bill may be of great use. The system of government is by the creation of fire brigades boards. They are created in respect of every district which in itself becomes a unit entirely separate from any other district in the State, and these boards become incorporated bodies. The membership of the board is based on representation by the State, by the municipal council, and by the fire insurance offices carrying on business in Western Australia; and by subsequent provisions it will be seen that an elective vote is given to those carrying on business in the district. Provision is made that where the district contains more than one municipality the State appoints two members, each municipality appoints one, and the fire insurance companies carrying on business in Western Australia elect two members. The provisions for the election of members are those usually found in Fire Brigade Acts; and in default of election by the parties on whom the choice falls in the first instance, the Governor may nominate any person or persons to act in their stead. There is a provision governing the tenure of office, and the right of the Governor to remove members from office for certain reasons set out in the Bill. The duties of the board are to take all necessary

steps for extinguishing fires, to protect life and property in case of fire, and to assume general control of all fire stations and brigades within the district; and the board may provide and maintain fire brigades consisting of efficient firemen, and furnish them with such appliances as may be necessary for their complete equipment and the performance of their duties. All the property which at the time of the passing of this Bill is vested in a municipality for the purpose of fire-brigade work becomes vested in the district board as soon as it is constituted; and the board has all the powers necessary for leasing, purchasing, or acquiring real or personal property for the purposes of the Act. We give the board very wide powers indeed for making regulations to carry out the intents of the Act. I do not propose to go through them *seriatim*. Members will see that they are, although very wide, necessary powers in a Bill of this character. The main government of each district is to be carried on by a superintendent, who will be appointed in the first instance by the board; and one part of the Bill is entirely devoted to setting out fully his duties and his powers. These powers are such as are requisite in in any superintendent, in order that he may be able efficiently to deal with outbreaks of fire, and also under certain clauses to make the necessary examination of buildings to prevent outbreaks of fire; and he has power given him under other clauses to delegate his authority to those officers of the brigade under him who may be assumed to be in a better position to carry out his duties. The sole reason for that is to facilitate amalgamation between different municipalities, so that there may be only one superintendent. He will appoint a deputy, with all his powers, in each district; but the superintendent will be the organising head, who will go round to see that each brigade is efficient. And I hope municipalities will see for themselves that it is necessary to reduce the cost to the lowest point compatible with efficiency, and that they will, therefore, if possible, use one staff for the management of the district. In another clause farther provision is made that when any fire occurs outside the district the superintendent may, and shall if he is directed by regulation, proceed to such fire and take charge of any brigade there, and shall direct their operations, and shall generally give the advantage of his advice and experience for the purpose of dealing with the outbreak. That refers to places outside the district; and farther, the brigade itself may if necessary proceed, on leave given by the superintendent or the foreman in charge, beyond the limits of the district, and help to deal with outbreaks of fire. Thus members will see that although we have necessarily made the Bill in the first instance for municipalities, we have also included provisions which will enable the services thereby created to be used for and be of benefit to those who dwell outside municipalities; and I do not know that we can go farther unless we make the district embrace not merely a municipality but all kinds of scattered communities; and if it were to do that we should be met by the objection, which appears to me to be fatal, that we cannot possibly obtain the revenue which members will see is provided in certain clauses dealing with the raising of funds necessary to carry out the system. When, as on the goldfields, houses are situated on leases scattered all over the locality, and a fire breaks out, the district superintendent or the foreman may, if a regulation has been framed by the district board authorising such act, take out the brigade and assist in extinguishing the fire; or if the superintendent goes himself to the spot he can take charge of and direct the operations of any brigade he may find there.

Mr. Johnson: But you propose to make the owner or occupier of the property pay the expenses.

The Attorney General: I will deal with that later on.

Mr. Scaddan: How will he go from Kalgoorlie to Trafalgar with a steam engine?

The Attorney General: The brigades have horses. I presume the hon. member will allow that horses can move a steam fire-engine to which they are attached. However, what I am pointing out is not that the brigades will be so efficient as to deal with fires at a great distance from the municipal or district boundary, but that they will be able to assist greatly in dealing with

fires, and will therefore be of much advantage to those who dwell within a reasonable distance of the municipal or district boundary. The hon. member must recollect that the distance from the Boulder municipal boundary to the place he mentions is not more than one and a-half or two miles.

MR. SCADDAN: It is more.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: If the member for Boulder (Mr. Collier) were here he could tell us the distance, and would possibly be on my side. I do not admit it to be two miles or three miles, which I think is much exaggerated. From the nearest boundary of Boulder it would be only a matter of a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes before the fire was reached.

MR. HOLMAN: Where would the fire be then?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: If the fire were so serious that in twenty minutes it was beyond control, then the building would be such that a fire could not be conquered if the brigade arrived five minutes after the outbreak. [MR. HOLMAN: No, no.] However, if the member for Murchison thinks we can establish fire brigades in every small settlement throughout the land——

MR. HOLMAN: They are already established.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: If he thinks we can maintain throughout the length and breadth of the State, in every small community, efficient fire brigades which can turn out at a moment's notice and deal immediately with a fire, he evidently forgets that it would be impossible to raise the revenue sufficient to meet the expenses of such organisations. The Bill is intended to create, in municipalities in the first instance, complete organisations to enable those municipalities to put brigades on an absolutely workable basis; and no doubt if at any future time it can be shown to the House that such powers can be extended wisely to smaller communities and on looser lines, no exception will be taken to such a proposal. But the objection of the member for Murchison does not in any way bar the right of relief to municipalities which already have fire brigades very highly organised, and which are already called on to bear the whole expense of maintaining those brigades. The Bill is meant to put th burden partly on the municipalitie partly on the insurance companies, and a small extent on the State, whic derives benefit from the maintenance the brigades.

MR. BOLTON: Suburbs like Subiac and Leederville will be forced to com under the authority of the central bod in Perth.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Ce tainly not. It is with the very opposit object that the Bill is designed. Thos municipalities can arrange to be con stituted a district for the purpose of th Act; and the district will be only suc as from its contour will admit of service being rendered to all the parties.

MR. SCADDAN: But the Executiv Council will constitute the district.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Ce tainly a municipality cannot proclai itself a district; but the hon. membe knows well that the proclamation mad by the Executive Council will be made the instance of the municipality.

MR. SCADDAN: If you think it wis you will be able to lump together th whole of the municipalities in Perth.

MR. BOLTON: That is the intention, it not?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Th intention is to proclaim districts with th consent of the constituent parts. A regards the constitution of the board w have made a most important provisio which differs entirely from any legisla tion on our statute book. Contribution to expenditure are based on the actua amounts spent in the contributing dis trict. Instead of raising money an giving it to the central board or distric board to spend in any part of the dis trict, the money raised in any part of th district must be proportionate to th total expenditure. That is, if two mun cipalities come under this Act and ar constituted one district, and if it be pro posed to spend two-thirds of the tota estimated expenditure in one municipalit and one-third in the other, then th amounts received will be in the sam proportion. Members will see at onc that this is very different from the exist ing law, whereby, although the mone is raised in any amount at the will of th central board, there is no provisio whatever for the benefit of the expendi

ture being derived by the place in which the money is raised. I think that provision will be very useful; because then, though municipalities may amalgamate for fire-brigade purposes, no municipality will lose by being taxed heavily while the money so raised is spent in another part of the district. A new provision which does not appear in any other measure in Australia is one by which every ratepayer in the district is obliged to make a return in a prescribed form of all fire insurances on his property. Hitherto we have been satisfied with demanding that return after a fire, and a provision to that effect is found in the Bill; but we have gone one step farther by providing that before any fire takes place ratepayers are obliged as a matter of course to make a return to the authorities constituted under the Bill of all insurances against fire on the ratepayers' property within the district. By that means we shall be able to sheet home the companies doing business in the district. It sometimes happens that a company not registered at all in Western Australia takes out fire insurances on properties in this State; and one of the objects of the clause is to discover that fact for the purpose of making such companies contribute with others to the upkeep of the fire brigades. A farther provision under another clause enables the board to employ the fire brigade outside the district. The board may agree with any local authority in an outlying district adjoining the district of the board that the services of the fire brigade shall be available for such outlying district. I feel sure members who wish to protect the interests of such outlying districts will recognise that they are to some material extent protected by that clause; because the district board can make a contract with the authorities of those outlying districts, under which contract the board will be bound to give them an effective fire-brigade service.

Mr. Scaddan: There will be no contract made; you can rest assured of that.

The Attorney General: I am sorry the hon. member thinks that the authorities will be so perverse as not to make any such contracts. I should think a place like South Kalgoorlie, for instance, would be only too pleased, through its local authority, to enter into a contract to have the services of an efficient fire brigade established in the district of Kalgoorlie. That they should object to do so appears to me to be beyond reason. However, that remains to be decided by time and experience. At all events, the Bill gives facilities for outlying districts to obtain the full protection of brigades organised under the measure; and they will be brigades in the most up-to-date sense of the word. Outlying districts can obtain that protection on terms to be mutually arranged between them and the district board governing those brigades. And farthermore we give powers for special services. The other provisions of the Bill are those which are usually found in fire brigade Bills. The member for Guildford has drawn attention to the fact that where property is uninsured, the brigade is entitled to receive payment for their services. Where the brigade does good service to uninsured persons, it gives services to persons standing outside all contribution to the upkeep of the brigade. I want the member for Ivanhoe to grasp the fact that this Bill is meant to afford relief to municipalities that for years past and to-day have supported, entirely at their own expense, efficient fire brigades. Although it is a worthy object to devise some means of increasing the efficiency of fire brigades in outlying districts, it does not rob the Bill of its merits. It constitutes a claim for a farther measure, if we can possibly design one, that will attain the object the member for Ivanhoe has in view. The outlying districts will not contribute one penny; therefore what have they to complain about? In outlying districts which have been spoken about, fire brigades exist only in a few instances, and the member who would wish to say that this Bill is limited in its extent, because it applies only to municipalities, must remember that there are 10 municipalities to one little district such as he referred to. The reason why, in the case of uninsured property, the fire brigade is entitled to ask for compensation, is that those who insure their properties keep insurance companies in a district which are obliged to contribute to the upkeep of the brigades, and therefore to a great extent those who do not insure do not enable

fire brigades to become efficient, and the uninsured person is, so to speak, sponging on his neighbours who have been more prudent. A provision of this character is to be found in all fire brigade Bills. If the member looks at the Act on our statute book, he will find exactly the same provision. If he will look at the South Australian Act, he will find a similar provision. If he will look at the Victorian, Queensland, or New South Wales Acts, he will find exactly the same provision. It is impossible to find a Bill of this decription without a provision of this character. I do not know that I can give farther information about the Bill, because members will see the other clauses which I have not referred to are clauses that occur in every fire brigade Bill on our statute book or on the statute books of any other State. This is a Bill which will meet with criticism from those who do not see that it will confer any direct advantage on the districts they are interested in. I am not putting this Bill forward as a panacea for all troubles of fire brigades in the State or for righting every possible wrong they may labour under, but it is a measure that deserves the support of the House, because it will supply those municipal districts that have shown in the past a desire to protect the property of citizens by the maintenance of a fire brigade with the relief which Parliament can afford. On that account it deserves the favourable consideration of members. When we come to the Committee stage, I shall be prepared to listen and give favourable consideration to amendments such as that which the member for Guildford suggested. Suggestions are always welcomed by a Minister in charge of a Bill. Since the Bill has been printed, I have noticed that it would be well to give greater powers to the district boards and define their powers and duties at greater length. For instance, to enable district boards to establish schools for training firemen, to establish voluntary brigades purely and simply in districts where it is not possible to establish a paid brigade, and also to maintain voluntary brigades where paid brigades do not exist. These are matters for the Committee stage. I hope members will recognise that, and not at this stage object to the second reading, because they will see that at a future stage they can improve the measure.

TO ADJOURN DEBATE.

MR. WALKER moved that the debate be adjourned for three weeks.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Three days.

MR. WALKER: We had only just received a copy of the measure, and no member had had an opportunity of reading it. It was only distributed just prior to the Attorney General moving the second reading. The interjections which had been made by members showed how keenly they felt on this matter. There were several who wished to see a comprehensive measure, and although the Attorney General had only pointed out a few of the salient features that the Bill contained, members on the Opposition side desired to introduce amendments to enlarge the scope of the Bill. If the Attorney General objected to three weeks, he would move that the debate be adjourned for a fortnight.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The reason that he did not wish a long adjournment was that he wanted the Bill passed this session. It had been promised again and again, and municipalities were urging the passage of the measure. If he granted a long adjournment, it would endanger the passing of the Bill. Bills put back at this time of the session did not have too great a chance of passing. He would consent to a fortnight's adjournment.

Motion passed, debate adjourned.

BILL—PERTH TOWN HALL.

SECOND READING.

Debate resumed from the 27th September.

MR. G. TAYLOR (Mt. Margaret): This Bill has caused a deal of comment in the city of Perth; and the change of the site of the town hall has been the subject discussed at public meetings. Ratepayers in some instances have passed resolutions which, if they go for anything, disapprove almost unanimously of the alteration of the site of the town hall. But we know how easy it is at public meetings for the chairman to declare a motion to be carried unanimously. When Mr. James, the then

Premier of the State, promised the mayor and town council of Perth that his Government would make a present of what is known as the police-court buildings, on certain conditions, I then spoke to the Premier as to the way in which the gift would be made, and the Premier said it was his intention and the intention of the Government to make a present to the Perth Council by adding the police-court site to the town hall site. He farther said, "You need not be anxious, because the title deeds will not be handed over until the sanction of Parliament has been obtained, and every member will then have an opportunity of expressing approval or disapproval of the attitude of the Government." There has been a deal of discussion in the Perth Council and outside about the presentation of this site. While the Government are anxious to make provision by which an exchange of the town hall site for the site in Irwin Street is to be made, I find on going through the files that as far back as 1901 in the first instance, in connection with the town hall site, a clipping from a report of the *Morning Herald* dated the 23rd February, 1901. I do not know what the clipping refers to, whether it is a report of a deputation or a council meeting, but I will read the clipping so that members will know the position:—

Councillor Quinlan next mentioned that the city council desired to become possessed of the title deeds of the property on which the town hall stood. The Minister replied that this question also had been gone into.

At 6·30, the SPEAKER left the Chair.
At 7·30, Chair resumed.

MR. TAYLOR (continuing): When you left the Chair I was reading an extract from the *Morning Herald* dated 23rd February, 1901. The extract continues:

The inscription on one of the stones on the western elevation clearly showed that the land was a gift to the people of Perth, although a careful search of the department's archives had failed to reveal the presence of documentary proof. However, it was his intention to recommend that the title should be given. The Government had evidently recognised that the property belonged to the citizens, or it would not have made overtures to purchase it from the council. Cr. Quinlan also asked that the titles in regard to all the municipal areas should be given to the council. It was just as well to have everything in order. The Minister promised that this matter would also receive his attention.

I presume from the reading of that report that it was a deputation to the Minister of that day. On going through the files we find that it was only about 1903 that the title deeds for the block upon which the town hall now stands were obtained by the council. We find also from the files that the then Premier (Mr. Walter James) promised to make a present to the council of the old police-court buildings, which stand on a part of the town hall site, on the completion of the police courts in Beaufort and Roe Streets. At that time members on both sides of the House, including myself, recognised that it would be hardly a fair thing for any Government off their own bat to do that without consulting Parliament, and the then Premier faithfully promised other members on both sides of the House, including myself who personally took an interest in this position, that he would not make the grant without first consulting Parliament. He pointed out that Parliament would have an opportunity, as the representatives of the people, of saying whether that grant should be given or otherwise; and we find from the files that Mr. James maintained that position. But the point I desire to draw the attention of the House to is what that hon. gentleman called acquainting Parliament. The then Premier laid these papers upon the table of the House, and according to the files they lay there for some time in the latter end of 1903 or 1904, and the Government of the day contended that this was consulting Parliament. I am of opinion that it was not consulting Parliament, and that it was only a subterfuge. To promise to consult Parliament, and to consider placing the papers on the table is consulting Parliament, is in my opinion to throw dust in the eyes of the people. We find Mr. James writing to the Minister for Works in that Government, pointing out that he had never promised the property except under the condition that Parliament should be consulted. In my opinion, Parliament has never yet been consulted. I am told by members

that this is ancient history. The position is now whether the deal which this Bill proposes to be made shall be made, whether this Parliament is going to pass the measure now under review, giving the Governor-in-Council power to transact this business, to exchange the town hall site for the Irwin Street site under certain conditions, that the Government give them £22,000. In the Bill there is a condition which perhaps may be removed in Committee, that is a stipulation that they shall build their town hall on the Irwin Street block.

THE PREMIER: You do not want it restricted to the one alternative.

MR. TAYLOR: I have no desire to restrict the council in any way. I am emphasing to-night my protest against any Government promising to members of Parliament that they will not do certain things without consulting Parliament, and then placing papers on the table of the House and holding that to be consulting Parliament. I maintain that it was a breach of faith on the part of the then Premier, and I must enter my protest in as strong terms as possible.

THE PREMIER: Where did you get a promise from?

MR. TAYLOR: I had the promise from the hon. member, I believe, from across the floor of the House, but I have had repeated promises from him in the corridor in the old House, as have also members in the Upper House and others in the Lower House. The member for East Perth (Mr. Hardwick) will know that three years ago this House was differently constituted from what it is to-day, and so was the other place. The gentlemen who took an active part in regard to this exchange or giving the police court to the council of Perth are not in either House now. They took exception to the Premier's making that gift, and the Premier said, "We will consult Parliament, and the House will decide." That has not been done, and I repeat that the placing of papers on the table is not consulting Parliament. But the proposition before us now is whether we will pass the second reading of the measure, enabling the exchange of the town hall site for a certain sum of money and the site known as the Irwin Street site The condition compelling the council, as it were, to build upon the Irwin Street block is one which I think the Government might easily remove. I hope the municipal council represent the wishes of the ratepayers. It is only fair to say they do. I give them that credit. and I assert that they will not as representatives of the ratepayers of Perth, do anything that will not be in the interests of Perth generally and the ratepayers. We have heard so much discussion for the last three or four years about this town hall site: we have seen a committee appointed to go into this matter, and they have put forward the argument that the area of the present town hall site is too small to build a town hall. They have analysed, they have investigated, and gone beyond the limits of Western Australia into the Eastern States, Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, and Brisbane, and they find each of the town halls in the capitals of the Eastern States stands on a larger block than that at the corner of Barrack and Hay Streets; and that being so they desire to get a bigger space. They may be able, by the money they receive from the Government £22,000 and the sale of the Irwin Street block, to put up a structure on some of the properties which the council to-day hold and own, which will be perhaps in just as central a position as the Irwin Street site. They will then be able to put up their town hall without incurring any liability. If the Irwin Street block is worth £17, 000 or £19,000 and they receive £22,000 they will have in round figures £40,000, and they have, as we know, the Russell Street site and Weld Square, which in the opinion of a large number of ratepayers in Perth are both central positions, and positions on which a town hall could be built which would be an ornament to the city and of great utility and advantage. The council may desire to dispose of the Irwin Street block with the object of building on their own land. That condition should be left open to the ratepayers and to the council. As one who has watched the discussions which have taken place at public meetings and has

read letters to the Press, I feel pretty confident that when the vote is put to the ratepayers as to whether they will accept the conditions laid down in this measure, they will reject it and will oppose the shifting of the town hall site. But that is a matter for the ratepayers to consider. If we can go by prominent citizens taking part in public meetings, and if the report of the Press on the following day is in any way accurate, there have been instances where ratepayers have asked for the site to be shifted, and the meeting held to consider the subject voted almost unanimously in favour of the present site. It is only a waste of time for this Parliament to discuss the measure, if the ratepayers are practically unanimous that they will not accept any of the provisions which this Bill will place before them. We have in this House an ex-mayor of Perth and other members who have belonged to the Perth Council. I am sure these gentlemen will, if not on the second reading in Committee, give us ample information so that we may amend the clause I have referred to, or will give reasons why the Bill should remain as it is. We have here the member for North Perth (Mr. Brebber), who I believe is yet a member of the City Council, and the Treasurer, who was at one time a councillor. We have the Speaker, who gave the council many years' service; and we shall have the advantage of his knowledge and experience when in Committee. I have no desire to oppose the second reading. Numbers of citizens, and when I say numbers I do not mean thousands, are diametrically opposed to changing the site of the town hall; and they have repeatedly said to me, "What are you going to do with the Town Hall Bill? It should be thrown out, because the ratepayers will not accept its conditions: they will not lose the present site." Discontented people with strong feelings generally express them; and I suppose the people who spoke to me are those strongly in favour of the present site. I do not say they are in the majority; but if we can accept reports of public meetings held for the purpose, and the statements of casual ratepayers whom we meet in Perth and suburbs, we must admit there is a strong desire on the part of ratepayers to keep the town hall on its present site, and not to erect a new building in Irwin Street or elsewhere. I hope that the Premier will hear in Committee the opinions of members of the City Council and other metropolitan representatives, who I am sure cannot live where they do without knowing the feeling of the ratepayers on this all-important question, and will if necessary make the Bill more elastic, so that the council may be in a position to do what they like with the money and the land. Suppose the council said to the Government, "We will give you the town hall site on condition that you erect a certain building, but you must not erect any other type of structure," that would be unreasonable. I suppose the Government, when they get the site, will erect whatever building they choose. And I think we should give the council and the ratepayers of Perth an opportunity of putting up a structure that will be an ornament to the city and of value to the people, and with that object we should hand over the site in the freest manner possible; we should not hamper them in any way. I take it for granted that the council as representatives of the ratepayers are in a better position to know what is necessary for the ratepayers than our Parliament who are not making a special study of the necessities of the city.

THE PREMIER (in reply as mover): It seems to me that the principal objection in the minds of members is that the selection of sites is very restricted; in fact, that only one site is available to the council. Certainly only one other site has been considered by the Government, namely the Technical School site, which was valued at some £25,760, while the Irwin Street site was valued at £20,000, or £5,760 less. But we have no authority from the council to enter into negotiations for any other than one of these sites; consequently, unless the council expresses a wish to that effect, it will be impossible to provide for a referendum on other sites. Weld Square and the High School site have been mentioned.

MR. TAYLOR: Weld Square is the property of the council.

THE PREMIER: If so, we should have to give them a larger sum, £20,000 more—the value of the Irwin Street property in addition. The House is concerned with the financial aspect of the question; and the Bill provides that we give the council the Irwin Street site and £22,000.

MR. TAYLOR: Not necessarily. You value the Irwin Street block at £20,000. If the council sold it for £20,000 and you gave them £22,000, they could use the £42,000 to build a town hall on their own property.

THE PREMIER: You ask that the council should be given power to build anywhere?

MR. TAYLOR: To do as they like with the money.

THE PREMIER: Unless some form of preferential ballot were provided in the Bill, it would be practically impossible to secure a majority of the ratepayers in favour of any one site. Many of the ratepayers would vote against say the Irwin Street site, on the off-chance of defeating it so that their site might be favoured. Possibly in Committee a suggestion may be made which will partly meet the difficulty; but the Government are supposed to accept the councillors as representatives of the citizens' wishes. The Bill is introduced at the request of the council; and from members of a committee of the council which waited on me I understand that with the exception of two members the whole council are unanimous in favour of the site proposed in the Bill; consequently the committee advised that the procedure the Government are now taking would be proper, and the Bill has been introduced in its present form. Until the council expresses some wish for different terms, that will be the position. Amongst the councillors who waited on me were an architect and one or two builders; and they assured me it was absolutely impossible to erect on the very limited space available at the corner of Hay and Barrack Streets a building worthy of Perth. It was also pointed out that Hay Street being only 80 links wide and containing two lines of tramway, traffic is always congested at the town hall corner on any important occasion, and that the Irwin Street block is really an ideal position for such a building as a town hall. However, I shall be prepared in Committee to consider any suggestion; but I should like to have some farther information from the City Council as to what they desire.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

IN COMMITTEE.

Resumed from the 25th September; MR. ILLINGWORTH in the Chair; the PREMIER in charge of the Bill.

Clause 38—Governor may declare certain lands open for selection as grazing leases:

THE PREMIER: When progress was reported the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Bath) had moved a short amendment, but subsequently amplified it as it now appeared on the Notice Paper. The object of the amendment was that lands thrown open for grazing purposes should be let on lease for 21 years, instead of being maturing freeholds. Our existing law provided for ordinary pastoral leases; and the clause sought to encourage lessees to improve their properties. Apparently the mover of the amendment realised that there were two forms of tenure, and the only tenure dealt with by the clause was conditional purchase or maturing freehold. The rental of pastoral leases in the greater part of the South-West District was £1 per thousand acres; and if we did not allow the lessees to acquire the freehold we could not encourage them to improve their land to the extent desired. The provision for poison leases was wiped out, and people could take up such lands under grazing leases. The land was divided into two classes, cultivable land and grazing land. It was no encouragement to a man eradicating poison from his grazing land to find that at the end of 20 years the land again reverted to the Crown. Consequently the proposal embodied in the Bill would be to the

advantage of the State, because it would encourage persons to endeavour to establish on their grazing land other than natural grasses. It was apparent that if a man had a right to the freehold of the land at the end of 20 years he would do all he possibly could to establish grasses, and under the system of progressive improvements he would need to improve his land to its highest possible capacity. The hon. member had referred to New Zealand grazing land and second-class land; but we here dealt with first and second-class lands under the designation of cultivable land, and decided that the improvements should be more stringent with the idea of getting all we possibly could out of the land. The same provisions applied to grazing land with the exception that it would be necessary to allow a larger area to be taken up. The grazing land selector should have more security of tenure than a 21-years lease, though undoubtedly the right of renewal was given. This practically brought up the question of freehold as against the non-alienation of the land, the point raised in the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition. It was the desire of the Government to induce persons taking up grazing leases to improve their lands to the utmost capacity, and unless the freehold was given we could not expect them to do it.

MR. WALKER: If the argument of the Premier was followed to its logical conclusion, persons would have no inducement to take up pastoral leases. To carry out the idea embraced in the amendment would be a wise step, because we must not only look to the needs of the immediate present, we must not forget the generations to come after, nor the evils existing in other States that might come upon us if we too speedily parted with our Crown lands. The experiment would be made in a part of the country where no great injury would be done, and where it could be watched with interest. Practically ownership was given. The man must be notified 12 months before the lease expired, and in that time the selector could make up his mind whether he was going to renew. If the land was valuable he would renew; if it was improved or cultivated he would renew. It was practically a freehold, except that it was acquired at less cost than freehold land. The State would have the advantave that rental was being steadily received. while the land was not parted with.

THE PREMIER: But in the case of parting with the land the payment was spread over 20 years. It was not a straight-out sale.

MR. WALKER: By parting with the freehold we sold the inheritance of the people to make ends meet at present. We should retain our estate and by other means furnish the funds required for the government of the country.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: What was the difference between rent and a tax on land?

MR. WALKER: There was this difference, that the State did not part with the freehold.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The hon. member had better read Henry George.

MR. WALKER: The land tax we proposed to raise was a mere fleabite on the Henry George system. The tax would be so insignificant and so worrying that the Government would be obliged to seek fresh avenues of taxation. The amendment proposed would obviate the necessity to resort to other forms of taxation. We would receive a steady income from the rents of these lands. Evidently the policy of the Government was to get money in a lump sum and swallow it up in the management of the country, and then possibly to resort to taxing the land so alienated. There was no harm in agreeing to carry o t this experiment proposed by the amendment on inferior lands, and it would be an object-lesson to us in dealing with other land. We would not be in the fix of other States, we would not have at an enormous cost to buy back land alienated in days gone by for small prices. For all these reasons he moved the amendment standing in the name of the member for Brown Hill:—

That all the words after "open" in line 10 be struck out, and the following inserted in lieu:—"The term of lease shall be 21 years with right of renewal or valuation for improvements as hereinafter provided."

MR. BUTCHER: One would think the Government desired to cut up the land in small parcels and pack it off to Japan. Though alienated, the land was still in the hands of the people and was always subject to taxation. In countries where they had been following the principle of non-alienation, they were resorting to the old principle of alienation. In New Zealand there was a measure before Parliament to revert to the original system of granting free titles, and to convert leaseholds into fee simple.

MR. COLLIER: What was the policy of the present Premier of New Zealand?

MR. BUTCHER: At any rate that was a measure before the New Zealand House. There was no objection to the alienation of lands. If there was one thing dearer to a man than any other it was to get the freehold of his land. It was all very fine for persons who could not buy a freehold to object to the alienation of land; but if one desired to convert a rabid socialist to a hide-bound conservative one would only need to give him an acre of land. The principle of non-alienation was absurd, and he (Mr. Butcher) would not support any measure in which the system of perpetual lease and non-alienation was included.

MR. COWCHER: We would not find many people taking up this land under leasehold and putting money in it. Leaseholders were likely to lose stock on poison land, and it would cost too much money in clearing to take it up on lease.

MR. TAYLOR supported the amendment. If people were desirous of settling on the land, and knew they could take up a lease for 21 years with the right of renewal, they would not hesitate in doing so. Members on the Government side must be expected to oppose a provision of this kind. Any law dealing with the land question, which would place the State in a better position than it was to-day would be opposed by members on the Government side. In the Eastern States the Governments had been forced to repurchase land for closer settlement; and notwithstanding the large area of land we had, repeatedly Governments had to purchase estates for closer settlement; so although the Government had tried to distribute the repurchased land in the fairest way possible, still there were complaints of favouritism. People who had fairly large areas had been successful in obtaining large slices of the repurchased land after it had been bought for closer settlement. He did not blame any Government for this; but conditions seemed to creep in which it was impossible for any Minister to block. We should take some stand to prevent the necessity of the State finding itself in the same position as the Eastern States were. He was strongly in favour of the non-alienation of Crown lands, and if the system were carried out in a proper manner there could be no hardship to anyone, but a great benefit would be conferred on the State. We wished to protect the rising generation. There was not too much good land to settle people on, and it was no use saying that people would not take up land under the conditions specified in the amendment.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Clause 24 of the Bill was fully considered and passed by the Committee, and under that clause it was provided that any person could take up 5,000 acres of grazing land under conditional purchase conditions, and under which the applicant would become entitled to the freehold. Clause 24 was debated at great length; but the hon. member for Mount Margaret did not put forward his views on that clause which he had voiced to-night. There appeared to be no objections to the freehold being given to those persons who took up the land under conditional purchase conditions. The non-alienation of land was a plank of the platform that the Opposition subscribed to; but there was no plank in that platform which evoked more controversy in the ranks of the Opposition following, for the reason that it was absurd to have so many different forms of tenure. This anomoly would never be quietly borne by the man who got the lesser estate. What was the difference of the State reserving to itself the freehold and not parting with it, and the State obtaining taxes from the land? Those who had gone into the

question of land tenure deeply had come to the conclusion that a State could dispose of the freehold as long as it exercised its right to obtain taxes from the land. That Government of which the member for Mount Margaret was not by any means one of the least prominent members before they ceased to hold office recognised the impossibility of persevering in the attitude of non-alienation of Crown lands. If that were so, why was that conversion brought about in their lines? The Leader of the Labour Government recognised the impossibility of persevering in his attitude. Even those who were wedded to the principle of non-alienation, when they came to administer the affairs of the State experienced a difficulty in carrying out the principle. He was not prepared to say the alienation of Crown lands in itself was anything of an evil, so long as the State recognised it had the right to look to the land for revenue in the way of taxation. Those who were professed reformers in regard to land tenure adopted that attitude. If we looked round the world, if we looked to other countries and examined their conditions, we found that the country alone possessed the elements of happiness for the great masses of the people where the freehold tenure was shared by the people. [Member: France.] Was there a better illustration in the world than France? Every single peasant there was a freeholder. Whereas the towns of France were not successful as centres of production and in many other respects, the backbone of the country consisted of the peasantry who owned the land they occupied. If members addressed themselves to the perennial discontent that had existed in Ireland they would find that every day that discontent was becoming less, and it had almost been removed—by what? By the fact that alterations had been brought in enabling those who tilled the land to acquire the freehold. It was a stupid system to have two classes of tenure in the country, and to perpetuate it would be merely to perpetuate a continuous sore in our land. For that reason, and for the reason that we had already adopted the principle which underlay this clause, we should at this stage have no hesitation in adopting the clause as printed in the Bill.

Mr. WALKER: Had we not two systems of tenure now, if not more? Would the hon. member convert into freehold those leases held by squatters in the North-West?

The Attorney General: If they bought the land.

Mr. WALKER: We had two systems, and they worked well, and every State in the Commonwealth had these two systems of leasehold and freehold. It was a question whether there was a place in the world that did not have them. As to France, what had happened to give the peasant freeholders the success they had? It was the breaking up of big estates, the prevention of a few men holding all the country. On the decease of a man his estate became subdivided amongst his children. Holdings became smaller and smaller, and the cultivation had become centred on small plots. What was it made Ireland discontented? It was the fact that they had in Ireland what this Bill would create, large landed estates, preventing the peasantry from getting any chance at all. Under the amendment submitted a man would be able to obtain 5,000 acres, or where the rainfall was not more than 10 inches 10,000 acres. What could there be wrong in that? That was not a small holding. He admitted the country was poor and not suited for agricultural purposes, that it was only intended for grazing purposes, and surely 10,000 acres in the far back-country where the rainfall was slight was a fair amount. One would only be paying a tax for the land, which he could hold if he so desired throughout the whole of his lifetime. In countries where land had been alienated to any large extent, the State had repeatedly had to come to the rescue of its citizens. A man who had saved a little could acquire land, but what hope had the great mass of workers of getting a little plot to call their own home? The large bulk of the population, because of what the landlords had condemned them to by their avarice and greed in the past, could never hope to have a home of their own, and the hon. gentleman would perpetuate

that state of affairs in this country. The hon. gentleman referred to Henry George. This was the kind of amendment that Henry George would support. Henry George did not believe in the alienation of Crown lands, but in charging taxes in the shape of rent. If men in this House had any feeling for the great multitude who had not homes of their own, they would be willing to try an experiment of this kind for the sake of giving those houseless and homeless ones a chance on the land.

MR. EWING: When Mr. Throssell was Minister for Lands there were instituted what were known as residential leases on the Goldfields, at Collie, Fremantle, and many other portions of the State. There was an agitation to obtain the freehold of these leases. Although these people might pretend to believe in what they preached, in practice they were very far from it. For many years in his own district he was opposed to asking for the fee simple, because the land was occupied on much the lines suggested by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Walker). But persons not only in his district but in the districts represented by almost every member on the Opposition side of the House were asking the Government to give them the fee simple of the land. The workers desired to have the fee simple of the land. He defied members to go to their own constituents and ask them whether individually they wanted the fee simple of their land. The member for Gascoyne had put the case in a nutshell when he stated that a man's great desire was to get a home for himself and feel that for his whole life he would have possession of the land and that he could leave it to his children. Clause 69 of this Bill provided for what were known as working men's blocks in substitution of the title now held. The Minister for Lands would not have brought in this clause unless he had known that there was discontent with regard to these particular holdings. By carrying out certain improvements and fulfilling certain conditions, those who occupied residential leases would be able to obtain the fee simple. Workmen were imbued with the desire to get homes for themselves which they could hand down to their children. He would vote in favour of enabling a man to get a home for himself and his children.

MR. SCADDAN: It was refreshing to hear the preceding speaker say he would assert the opinions of his constitutents, in view of his recent vote on the school fees regulations; but the hon. member was quite confused as to the object of the amendment, that the State should reap the benefit of the unearned increment in respect of these leases. The amendment would benefit the State without harming the lessee, who would have the right of renewal after 25 years, the lease being thus as good as a freehold.

THE PREMIER: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Walker) might have given the Government credit for not perpetuating the present practice, which tended to build up large estates. The introduction of the Bill proved that the Government desired to restrict considerably the area of estates.

MR. WALKER: For that the Government were given full credit by him.

THE PREMIER: Subclause 4 as drafted provided for residence on these blocks for six months of the first year and nine months in each of the next four years. Unless we encouraged people to improve the very inferior land, poison country and very poor sandplain dealt with by the clause, such land would not be taken up or improved. The improvements contemplated by the amendment would be reasonable on land which would carry one sheep to 10 acres; but much of the land contemplated by the clause would not carry a sheep to 100 acres. If at the expiry of the lease a new lessee could step in, the first tenant would not eradicate poison. The argument on non-alienation *versus* freehold should be deferred till we reached Clause 69. The Leader of the Opposition referred to New Zealand; but a large area of that country was unsuitable for any but grazing purposes; hence the New Zealand law, like the amendment, provided for 21 years' leases. Those who knew our inferior lands would agree they were not likely to be taken up unless we gave the lessee every possible encouragement.

Mr. FOULKES sympathised with the Acting Leader of the Opposition in his opposition to the State alienating its assets and using the proceeds for current expenditure. All must admit that was not good finance. But the objection could best be met by devoting the proceeds of land sales to paying off the public debt. The hon. member did not seem to realise that the leasehold system had never given satisfaction. The greater part of London and other large English towns was let on 99 years' leases by large landowners. A Liberal Government was asked to force the landowners to grant the fee simple to leaseholders, and in 1880 Mr. Gladstone adopted this as part of the Liberal programme. In 1884, the Gladstone Government, by the Irish Land Act, gave security of tenure for a term of years, the rent being fixed by a land court. Even that did not satisfy the tenant, who still clamoured for his freehold; and ultimately the Government advanced £12,000,000 to enable the tenants to obtain the freehold.

Mr. Troy: The Irish tenant was not dealing with the State, but with a private landlord.

Mr. FOULKES: Dealing with a landlord who had no voice in fixing the rent or the term of the lease. Some years ago the English Royal Commission on the Housing of the Poor ascertained that the main cause of the miserable accommodation of the poorer classes in large towns was the leasehold system, because the owner who granted the 99 years' lease did not care how far the buildings fell into disrepair. [Mr. Collier: A private property.] The principle was the same. The owner let the land for 99 years, sometimes on building lease. The building suitable at the commencement was in most cases unsuitable at the expiry of the lease, owing to altered circumstances in the locality. During the last 10 years the lessee, having no inducement to repair, would allow the building to fall into a pitiable state; and thus the class of tenants to whom he sublet became poorer and poorer. The James Government, though favourable to leaseholds, recognised that it was impossible to make hard-and-fast conditions, owing to the different characteristics of different localities. The amendment might apply in some districts, but in the majority of districts it would not, and especially it would not where it was necessary for money to be spent in improving the land. No one would be so silly as to spend money in improving a lease in the South-West. We heard a great deal of talk about the great value of the land in the State, but it was only rendered valuable after the expenditure of considerable sums of money.

Mr. COLLIER: It was not surprising to hear the arguments advanced by the member for Claremont; we were accustomed to hear these arguments for many years throughout Australia. The statement that no one would take up leaseholds was simply a bald statement trotted out years ago in New Zealand and disproved. It was foolish for any member to trot out these statements in view of the experience of New Zealand.

The Minister for Works: What was the result of the experience of New Zealand?

Mr. COLLIER: It was highly satisfactory. Fourteen years ago, before the adoption of the leaseh ld system, the people were flocking out of New Zealand; but since the introduction of the leasehold system the population had increased by 64,000.

The Minister for Works: The point was what system they now preferred in New Zealand.

Mr. COLLIER: It was not a question of what was a Minister's present policy in New Zealand, but what was in the best interest of the State as a whole. No doubt those in possession of land preferred the fee simple, but that was not the point; it was a question of what was in the best interests of the bulk of the population, and the leasehold system in New Zealand was an unqualified success.

Mr. Butcher: How had the population of Western Australia increased owing to our land laws?

Mr. COLLIER: The improvement in Western Australia did not depend upon the land laws; it was owing solely to the fact that Western Australia had produced 460 tons of gold.

MR. BUTCHER: Nor was the improvement in New Zealand due wholly to the land laws.

MR. COLLIER: Then to what was it due? It was due to nothing else. Western Australia should benefit by the experience of New Zealand and by the experience of the Eastern States, where land alienated 20 or 30 years ago at a nominal sum was now being repurchased at a high figure. It was foolish to give away land to-day which we would be compelled to repurchase at a value given to the land not by the owner of the land but by the expenditure of public money in the State. The reference by the Attorney General to Ireland was rather unfortunate. If any country demonstrated the absolute inequity of private ownership of land, it was Ireland. Why had Ireland during 50 years decreased in population to the extent of four millions? Because of the private ownership of the land; because of landlordism. The illustrations of the member for Claremont were unfair. There was not in England to-day any system of leasehold such as that advocated by the Labour party in Australia. The hon. member quoted the case of a man getting a lease of land for 99 years and then subletting the lease at a high figure. That was just where the curse came in. It was impossible to do it under the system proposed by the Labour party in Australia. At present the curse of private ownership was not so apparent in Australia as in older countries, but it was only a matter of time. The whole of the land in England was owned by one and a-half million people, out of a total population of 43 millions.

MR. BUTCHER: There was not enough land in England to go all round.

MR. COLLIER: If the hon. member had read anything he would know that there was sufficient land in England to maintain the whole of the population. The members for Claremont and Gascoyne argued that might was right. No one disputed that it was the natural desire of a man to obtain as much land as he possibly could; it was the natural desire of the burglar to obtain as much money from the pockets of others as he possibly could. We were not concerned with the desire to obtain land, but with what was best for the bulk of the population. In the alienation of land we were continually moving in a circle, giving away to-day what we were compelled to buy back to-morrow at an enhanced value, as was the case in Victoria and in other Eastern States, where it was essential for the life of the State to repurchase estates given away at a nominal figure years ago. If it was a sound principle to give away the lands of the State it should operate for all time, but instead of that we found that in the course of a few years the State had to repurchase land.

MR. FOULKES: And to sell the fee simple again.

MR. COLLIER: Yes; they did not recognise the mistakes of the past, and perpetuated the evil.

THE PREMIER: It must be remembered that in the Eastern States they did not limit the area in the early days.

MR. COLLIER: Thirty years ago it was not possible for one man to select more than 640 acres in Victoria.

THE PREMIER: Then they dummied all the rest.

MR. COLLIER: They could only select 640 acres, but how did it work out in operation? It was only a matter of time when the small estates became large estates. If a man owning the fee simple of a block of land desired to go to some other part of the world and sold out, that land was at once purchased by the rich man alongside, and in course of time all the farms in the neighbourhood were purchased by the wealthy individual. We could limit the area of land taken up to any extent, but as soon as the holders obtained the fee simple they sold out, and where there were originally five settlers owning 2,000 acres each there was one settler owning 10,000 acres. One had only to point to the members sitting in Opposition to refute the argument of the member for Collie, because members from the goldfields were pledged to the leasehold principle.

MR. TROY: In a discussion of this kind one noted the big gulf that divided members on the Opposition side from

members on the Government side. At one time he (Mr. Troy) was in favour of the alienation of Crown lands, but he attended a congress in Perth and listened to the arguments of a number of persons who were well acquainted with the conditions of land tenure. Since that time he had endeavoured to learn what he could about the question, and to-day he was strongly in favour of non-alienation. Some members were ashamed to say they had changed their opinions, but he was not. The more he had studied this question the more emphatically he was convinced that the only principle that was right in connection with land tenure was that of non-alienation. Members on the Government side wished to pander to the greed, selfishness, and cupidity of the people, while members in Opposition wished to do what was best for the people as a whole. The member for Gascoyne had said that the people of New Zealand had changed their opinion on the question of the alienation of Crown lands; but to-day the people of New Zealand were more convinced than ever as to the justice of non-alienation. When the system of non-alienation was introduced in New Zealand a certain proportion of land was set apart to be leased for a term of 999 years. At the last general election the Opposition raised the cry of the alienation of Crown lands. The people were so favourably disposed to the non-alienation principle that the Opposition were wiped out. The Premier of New Zealand to-day had laid down in his policy speech that no more sales of State land were to take place, and instead of giving a lease of 999 years, the Government of New Zealand were giving leases for a term of 66 years. One member on the Government side had said that holders would not improve their properties as long as the land was on a leasehold tenure. The member for Gascoyne represented a constituency where the people were living on the leasehold principle. The pastoralists were carrying on their industry on that principle, and there had been no complaints. In his (Mr. Troy's) constituency there were a number of pastoralists carrying on the industry with the non-alienation of Crown lands.

THE PREMIER: How many acres could they hold?

MR. TROY: The pastoralists held large areas because the land was not good.

THE PREMIER: This clause only referred to inferior land. We had already dealt with first and second class land.

MR. TROY: If he was a member of a Government and held a piece of land, to show his sincerity in his belief in the policy of leasehold he would rather have that land as a leasehold than a freehold. The great objection to the amendment was the fear of Government supporters that it would be unpopular and discourage land settlement. A little time ago the Government adopted new education regulations, but they had to withdraw them because they were unpopular. The Opposition were fighting for the principle not because it was popular, but because we were convinced of the justice and soundness of the claim. There was too much pandering to self. Members on the Government side of the House were everlastingly appealing to electors on selfish motives. Having gone into this question he was emphatically convinced that the system of non-alienation was the best for the country. As to Great Britain and Ireland and other countries which had been mentioned, all the poverty and evils which had obtained there in connection with the welfare of the people had been due to the policy of alienation of Crown lands. Let us try the system advocated, and if we did that no doubt it would have beneficial results.

[MR. DAGLISH took the Chair.]

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member who had just sat down had given us to understand that he was in favour of the non-alienation of Crown lands. He (the Minister) did not for a moment question the honesty of the hon. member's change of views. But the fact that the hon. member had found it necessary to make some alteration in his opinions should lead his friends on that (Opposition) side to be more charitable in judging other individuals when they found it necessary to change their views. So far as this particular measure

and this principle were concerned, from his experience he thought the policy advocated by the Oppositon side of the House would be fraught with very distressful circumstances to this country. They had brought before the Committee the system of land tenure in New Zealand and had instanced the success which leasehold tenure had there as a reason why this particular amendment should be adopted. In so doing they were, he suggested, straining one's sense of what was fair argument. In his amendment the member for Brown Hill suggested 21 years' tenure. In New Zealand we found that they had first of all a cash system; then there was the lease with a purchasing clause; and then a lease in perpetuity at a rent of four per cent. of the capital value. The official Year Book showed that land was leased for 999 years subject to the conditions of residence and improvements described.

MR. COLLIER: Did not the present Premier propose to alter the system?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Never mind what the Premier proposed. He was taking things as they were. If he could get a 999-years lease at a low rental, he would very nearly as soon have it as freehold.

MR. SCADDAN: Those rentals were re-valued.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: In New Zealand the freehold system was the more popular.

MR. SCADDAN: How did the hon. member judge the popularity?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: By the amount of land taken up year by year during the 14 years the system had been in operation.

MR. COLLIER: What about members of Parliament?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: If the bulk of the members in New Zealand were committed to a leasehold system of tenure he would prefer to take the system of tenure which the people of New Zealand chose when taking up land.

MR. WALKER: Selfishness always would be triumphant.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The fact that the leasehold system of tenure found less favour from the people of New Zealand than did the freehold system showed that the people themselves preferred the free old system. We were told of the evils existing in the old country because of the system of land tenure. It was said that land monopoly had been the cause of most of the evils from which they suffered in the old country. Was it a fair thing to compare the land system of the old country with that set out in this particular Bill, seeing that in the old country they had the law of entail, and that it was next to impossible to break up the bulk of the large landed estates, these going down from father to son, from generation to generation, and there being practically no free sale of that land? This Bill did not provide for large estates, but limited holdings. If one were to go into the streets in and around this city and ask occupiers if they would prefer to change their freeholds into leaseholds, not five per cent. would be willing to do so.

MR. COLLIER: The Minister asked what was popular, not what was right.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: On other occasions the hon. member would tell us that the voice of the people was the voice of God, but when that did not suit him he said "You ask for what is popular, not for what is right." There was a street in Fremantle with something like 40 houses, and 33 of them were owned and occupied by workmen. If we could encourage that sort of thing not only in our urban population but in our country population we should be building up a source of strength and greatness in this State. The natural instinct of nearly every man was to desire a home of his own. Members opposite had failed absolutely to show any particular reason why this clause should be altered.

MR. TAYLOR: Members on the Government side had to-night in common with many other nights derided this (Opposition) side of the House for being inconsistent. Ministerialists accused the Opposition of not representing the majority of the electors. Speaking of alienation, Mr. J. M. Hopkins, when member for Boulder, said that all the electors of Boulder and Kalgoorlie favoured the fee

simple, and that the Labour party if it went to the country on the question would come back badly beaten. With a platform providing for non-alienation the Labour party fought several elections, and Mr. Hopkins was not now in the House. Out of a possible 17 members for goldfields constituencies 14 were in Opposition, though the Labour platform included non-alienation. The Minister for Works argued that the people of New Zealand favoured the freehold; but the late Mr. Seddon fought the last general election on that question, and the Opposition came back a broken party of some half-a-dozen; and in January last, when he (Mr. Taylor) visited that country the friends of the fee simple could hardly be found. At no time was Mr. Seddon returned with so large a majority; and notwithstanding that the term of lease was 99 years, his successor intended to make it 66. That would be impossible if there were a shred of truth in the arguments of members opposite. New Zealand had tried the two systems. Fourteen or 15 years ago her people were starving because the fee simple tenure was in force, thus favouring the land monopolist. It was idle to attribute New Zealand's prosperity to climate; for the climate was the same 14 years ago. The improvement had resulted from liberal legislation. In the United States the monopolists had fought for slavery, contending that without slavery the country would be ruined; yet we knew the position of America to-day. If our own advocates of the fee simple had their way they would revert to the position in America before the slaves were emancipated. Could anything better be expected from the hon. members? The votes of Government supporters directly concerned in land speculation and land monopoly should be challenged. The member for Collie (Mr. Ewing) twitted Oppositionists for not voicing the wishes of their constituents. That was absolutely incorrect. How many Government supporters voiced the wishes of their constituents a few days ago on the school fees regulations? Was there ever in the history of Responsible Government such an ignominious back-down by a Ministry? The only arguments against the amendment were those usually advanced by people who favoured monopoly.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: These lengthy Opposition speeches seemed strange, for on the second reading members had not advocated the great principle of non-alienation. Apparently by a fluke it was afterwards perceived that the Opposition had an opportunity of airing their principles. After the most important clauses dealing with first-class land were passed, second-reading speeches were made on the alienation of grazing leases.

MR. TAYLOR: Labour members did work in Committee, not on the second reading.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member always did a lot of work when he rose to speak, but not at any other time. He (the Minister) had always opposed non-alienation, and believed in the fee simple. He resented the language of the member for Mount Magnet (Mr. Troy) to Government members, most of whom when before their constituents emphatically expressed a desire to grant when possible the fee simple to settlers. The hon. member was returned as an opponent of alienation, but some time afterwards at a meeting of the Trades and Labour Congress he pointed out that he had been a strong advocate of non-alienation, but that his parliamentary experience showed him it was neither good nor feasible; therefore he had changed his mind, and approved of the alienation of Crown lands. [MR. TROY: No such thing.] The hon. member again changed his mind, and now said that had he the fee simple he would willingly exchange it for a lease.

MR. TROY: For a lease from the Crown.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: And presumably a lease of the kind suggested by the Leader of the Opposition, for 21 years with the right of renewal. But Parliament always had power to cancel the right of renewal.

MR. SCADDAN: On what tenure were gold mines held?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: A 21-years lease with the right of renewal; but the section could be amended. The 99 years' lease in New Zealand was next

to a fee simple. By giving the fee simple we got a better class of settlers. Though some on residential leases on the goldfields did not wish to hold the fee simple, the majority of those he had met did desire to get the fee simple, and he had promised to assist them to get it. It was true there were occasions when we could not give the fee simple. We could not give the fee simple to those holding residential leases on the Collie mineral areas. There was a reason for that. The State should reserve, as far as possible, all mineral areas. In regard to the pastoral leases, it would be absurd for the State to part with such large areas. The principle this State should adopt was to have a large number of small areas, and by giving the fee simple we gave the settlers more security.

MR. COLLIER: As soon as the fee simple was acquired there was nothing to prevent the freeholders acquiring more land.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: We could pass legislation to limit the area one person could hold.

MR. SCADDAN: That could not be done under the British Constitution.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Certainly, an Act could be passed. So long as we retained the power to tax the land it was the same as not parting with the land; and as people were desirous of holding the fee simple, we should not depart from the principle adopted in the past.

MR. WALKER: Mining companies were perfectly satisfied with their leases; but once we gave the fee simple of mineral areas to any person or company, there would be dissatisfaction at the leasing system. Again, in the pastoral leases there was no dissatisfaction among the squatters. There was no dissatisfaction now existing at the abolition of slavery. If we swept away the present system of giving the fee simple the people would become contented with the leasing system, just as the pastoralists were satisfied with their leases, and the mining companies with their leases, and every civilised community with the system of no-slavery; and the next generation would thank us for the services we rendered by abolishing from the country that feeling of selfishness and greed for getting land.

MR. BUTCHER: The hon. member in saying that pastoral lessees were not dissatisfied must not forget that all the land was allotted among the lessees on the same conditions. No land was alienated alongside a piece of land held under lease. It was the same on the goldfields. A system of leaseholds was adopted in the first instance; persons took leases and were satisfied, because one man was not in a better position than another. His objection to the non-alienation of land was that for years past people had been entitled to get freeholds, and we naturally looked to that system to be continued; it was only human nature. If we adopted the principle of non-alienation it would have the effect of unduly increasing the value of the areas that had already been alienated, or seriously depreciating the value of the areas. If we could bring the whole state of affairs back to its original position and start again on scratch, then we might adopt the principle of non-alienation, otherwise the system was outside practical politics.

THE CHAIRMAN: It was most undesirable for members to make second-reading speeches on every clause that came up for discussion. He had permitted the practice so far because of the great principle involved, but it must be discontinued.

MR. TROY: The Minister for Mines had alleged that he (Mr. Troy) was pledged to the non-alienation of Crown lands. He had never been pledged to anything, in fact he had not signed the pledge, but he had an honest conviction against the principle. In congress he raised the question of non-alienation *versus* alienation; and he did so that the question might be discussed so that he could hear both sides. He was satisfied non-alienation was the best policy.

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

Ayes	10
Noes	21
Majority against ..	11

Ayes.	Noes.
Mr. Bolton	Mr. Brown
Mr. Collier	Mr. Butcher
Mr. Heitmann	Mr. Carson
Mr. Horan	Mr. Cowcher
Mr. Scaddan	Mr. Daglish
Mr. Taylor	Mr. Davies
Mr. Underwood	Mr. Ewing
Mr. Walker	Mr. Gordon
Mr. Ware	Mr. Gregory
Mr. Troy (*Teller*).	Mr. Gull
	Mr. Hardwick
	Mr. Hayward
	Mr. Keenan
	Mr. McLarty
	Mr. Monger
	Mr. N. J. Moore
	Mr. Price
	Mr. Smith
	Mr. Stone
	Mr. Veryard
	Mr. Layman (*Teller*).

Amendment thus negatived; clause passed.

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

PAPER PRESENTED.

By the Premier: Post-office Savings Bank Annual Balance Sheet and Return.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 20 minutes past 10 o'clock, until the next day.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 3rd October, 1906.

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4·30 o'clock p.m.

Prayers.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: Post Office Savings Bank Annual Balance Sheet—Report and returns for the year ended 30th June, 1906.

EXPERIMENTAL FARM RETURN, DELAY.

Hon. W. T. LOTON (East): I would like to ask the Leader of the House when the returns moved for in regard to the Experimental Farm will be laid on the table of the House. It is nearly four months since they were asked for, and the report is a long time coming. I do not wish to offer a threat, but I shall be prepared in a very short time, unless the report is on the table, to move a definite motion that the business of the House be suspended until the report is produced.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. D. Connolly): I regret that the report has not been ready before this, but in conversation the Minister for Agriculture informed me that the accounts had not been kept in a form which would facilitate the getting out of the return quickly. He assured me a week ago that he would have it ready in a short time, and it was his intention to see the hon. member and explain exactly how the delay occurred. Anyhow, I will have it ready next week.

PAPERS—ESPERANCE GRIEVANCE, DOCTORS AT VARIANCE.

Hon. C. E. DEMPSTER (East) moved:—

That all papers in connection with a complaint made by Dr. Harrison against Dr. Wace, of Esperance, and the Derby auditor's report relating thereto, be laid on the table of the House.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. D. Connolly): It was unusual for a member to move for papers, without giving some reason. If the hon. member would state his reason, one would know whether it would be desirable to ask the House to pass the motion or not. He would not agree to ask the House to order the production of papers on a motion without some reason. If it was not necessary to state the reason it was not necessary to table the motion.