

BILL—TRANSFER OF LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [3.45]: In order to assert and maintain the undoubted rights and privileges of this House to initiate legislation, I move, without notice, for leave to introduce a Bill for an Act to amend the Transfer of Land Act, 1893.

Leave given; Bill introduced and read a first time.

GOVERNOR'S OPENING SPEECH.

MR. SPEAKER: In company with hon. members of this Chamber, I attended His Excellency the Governor in the Legislative Council Chamber to hear the Speech which His Excellency was pleased to deliver to both Houses of Parliament. For greater accuracy, I have had printed copies of the Speech distributed amongst hon. members of this Chamber.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

First Day.

MISS HOLMAN (Forrest) [3.47]: I move—

That the following address be presented to His Excellency the Governor in reply to the Speech he has been pleased to deliver to us:—"May it please Your Excellency. We, the members of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of the State of Western Australia, in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign, and to thank Your Excellency for the Speech you have been pleased to deliver to Parliament.

I desire to congratulate the Government on the result of the financial year, which, as we have seen, is the best since 1911. It is very pleasing to note that the condition of trade, industry, and land development generally may be regarded as satisfactory. It is also stated in the Speech that the timber export trade has been maintained during the past year. I regret, however, that the conditions of the workers in the industry have not improved. The basic wage paid to workers in the timber industry is computed upon an unfair basis. It is computed on the figures of the Federal Statistician. The Western Australian towns that are included in the 20 country towns of Australia, ex-

cluding Queensland, are Bunbury, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, and Northam. I think you will agree, Mr. Speaker, that these four towns of Western Australia have nothing whatever to do with our timber centres. The cost of living is greater in these timber centres than it is in the towns. The freight on goods that are sent up to these centres is a big consideration. The stores are often unprotected when they are sent from the city, with the result that much loss and damage occur. The stores are sometimes left in unsheltered places, while awaiting transfer to the men out on the bush landings. The present rate received by the timber workers is £4 3s. per week. I regret to say that during the last 12 months it has been as low as £4 1s. per week. I wish to say a word for the staff employees on the mills. There is no award governing them. In many centres they work long hours, and the conditions are not what they should be. I am pleased to note that the Government have decided to give the timber workers in their employ a 44-hour week. That is what they are entitled to, and I thank the Government for their decision. Perth is at present the only capital city wherein the timber workers are not working 44 hours. Notwithstanding the poor conditions that appertain in the industry, the employers have served a log on the union asking for a reduction in wages and a different set of conditions. In some cases the reductions asked for mean £1 a week. The employers have also asked for an increase in the hours worked by the timber employees. When the 44-hour week was universal in the industry the employers went to great lengths to make that period compare unfavourably with the 48-hour week. I have in my possession sworn statements showing the ways and means that were taken to prevent the 44-hour week from operating favourably, and to ensure that not so good a result was obtained from the 44-hour week as from the 48. Another disability under which the timber workers are suffering is in regard to lost time. A great deal of time is lost on the mills. Much of this is due to shortage of logs. Surely the basic wage is little enough for the men without their suffering lost time. They have lost time and lost wages because of wet weather, the shortage of logs, and other factors. The basic wage is really calculated upon a worker receiving a certain amount per week over a period of 52 weeks in the year. The short-

age of logs is largely a matter of management or rather of mismanagement. This is proved by the fact that some mills suffer from no shortage of logs or any lost time. At Marinup there has not to my knowledge been a shortage of logs or any lost time. I know that at the railway mill at Dwellingup, over a period of 12 years, there has been a loss of only one and a-quarter days on account of shortage of logs, and during that time the men were otherwise employed. Another thing I would refer to is the influx of foreigners into the timber industry. In some of the centres practically half the employees are foreigners, and in one particular centre 55 per cent. of the men employed come within that category. In gangs of men perhaps only the ganger is a Britisher, and in other cases even the ganger is a foreigner, and there may be only one Britisher in the gang. These men are good unionists when they join up, but I think something should be done by the Labour Department for their protection. I could quote instances showing that these new arrivals have been imposed upon. In some cases they are sent out to work in the bush, and cannot speak much English. They work there and find they cannot get ahead of their store bills. Probably one of the gang may be able to speak English, and he may do the business for the remainder. From one of the centres there is a complaint that a foreigner has taken advantage of the rest of the gang, none of whom can speak English, and has re-branded the sleepers and obtained the money for them instead of the other fellows, who had done the work, receiving the reward for it. I know of another case in which anything up to 50 per cent. of the sleepers cut by these men have been condemned. Instead of these men getting any return for their labour the sleepers are re-cut to smaller sizes by others on day work, and the men who originally cut them have received nothing. The conditions of life on some of the mills, especially at the landings, are very dreadful. In many of the centres there are no sanitary arrangements whatever. Sometimes pits are supplied for the convenience of single men, but for the married people there are no conveniences—they have to provide their own. I have slept in a bush hut, and have counted the holes in the roof. There have not been more than 14 sheets of iron over my head, but I have counted 63 holes in them. Fortunately

for myself I have not been there in the wet weather, but the people who live in these centres have to put up with all the inconvenience due to wet weather. At the boarding house in a particular centre, a tablecloth cannot be used. They put oilcloth on the table because the tablecloths would be ruined. The sheets of iron that are used for roofing are made to do duty time and time again. The camps are shifted every now and again when cutting is started in a new place. Men, women and young children have to put up with all these disabilities. I was in a camp at one of the centres, and the holes in the floor of the structure I was in were numerous, and the gaps between the boards were an inch wide. If one sat on the floor the breeze whistled around one's ankles. It was all right for me because it was fine weather on the occasion of my visit, but it is not all right for the people who have to live there all the time. At the particular place I speak of the employee had spent a pound out of his own pocket to provide a hessian lining under the roof to keep the rain off his bed. The camps have to be shifted at intervals, and the hessian and any lining he provided would require to be pulled down every time this occurred. The place, however, did not belong to this man and he did not know whether he would be permanent, and he could not go on doing this sort of thing. He had a wife and a baby six weeks of age. He could not take the wife and the baby to that camp. She might have died if he had done so, for she had had two relapses. Married couples are generally provided with two rooms on the landings, but in this particular case the worker had to build a lean-to at the back for his stove so as to have a fireplace inside. The men frequently get wet, and there must be some place in which they can dry their clothes. This particular man was therefore subjected to a great deal of inconvenience. There were no locks in the doors, and the hinges were made of pieces of old belting. In another place there was no spouting on the roofs, and the rain ran down the wall. At one camp the stables were situated in the middle of a group of houses, and the flies were very thick. It was winter time when I was there, but one could not raise a cup of tea from the table to one's mouth without flies dropping into it. Surely there must be some way of improving these conditions. At many centres

there is no proper water supply. Most members will have read in the "Daily News" last week of the shocking occurrence at one of the sawmilling centres in connection with the pollution of the water supply. I should like to see something done by the Minister to ensure a pure water supply at all these centres. I see from the Speech that the agricultural water supplies and metropolitan water supplies are being catered for. It is quite as important that the timber centres should also be catered for in this respect. Typhoid epidemics have occurred at the mills through stagnant water, and there has been a great deal of sickness in other places from time to time. The landings are sometimes as far away as 25 miles from the mills, and there is no communication during the week end between the landing and the mill. If any person falls sick he or she has to depend on the kindness of someone who possesses a hack, and can take the message to the mill and obtain medicine and advice. There are no nurses for the women at the bush landings and when the time comes for the mother to leave, she has to travel on the log rake or on the engine tender, or else remain in the bush to take her chance. I have travelled on the tender. The day was fine; it was a novel experience and I enjoyed it. I can quite understand, however, that if a mother were to travel with her young baby during winter months under such conditions it would not be pleasant. I know of one instance where a mother with her young baby four weeks old had to travel on the engine in the rain. Both she and the baby were wet through. Thus, members will see that a mother in those circumstances would not enjoy her trip on the engine or seated on the logs as I did in my experience. At some centres first aid outfits have been provided, some being obtained through the local medical funds. The Minister in charge could do something to improve the conditions of the workers in the timber areas by introducing a Bill to regulate the industry. I have perused the Mines Regulation Act and I notice that, under its provisions, first aid outfits have to be made available, and in many other directions provision is made for improving the working conditions of miners. Similar legislation could well be introduced as soon as possible to have a similar effect upon the timber workers' conditions. Some employers have declared that the bush telephones have proved un-

workable. I saw one bush telephone that had been run out for $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles through the bush. The wire was attached to the trees, there being no telephone posts. That telephone was quite successful, and it did not cost much to erect. It goes without saying that the further the telephone line was carried, the cheaper would be the cost of construction per mile. Regarding educational facilities in the bush, it is pleasing to note that the Minister for Education has approved of the provision of a railway carriage school at Jarrahdale Landing. Such a type of school represents a considerable saving in the bush country, because when the camp has to be shifted all that is necessary to remove the school is to hitch it on to the train and the school carriage is transferred easily. In many timber centres there are children but no schools. The worker has to either keep two homes going or else the children have to do without any education at all. When I visited Jarrahdale Landing there were 11 children between the ages of 14 and seven years. They were receiving no education whatever. There is nothing for a girl of 14 years to do in the bush, and she is too young to leave home. The boys have little opportunity beyond securing ordinary schooling. I know of one instance of genius suffering neglect because of such circumstances. He is a young lad who is a left-handed violinist. The boy is very clever indeed, but his parents cannot afford to send him away in order that he may carry on his studies. The result is that that lad, who is a little genius, has to take his chance in the back blocks. I have heard many complaints regarding little children having to walk three miles or more to and from school in the wet weather. Another matter concerning the timber areas relates to roads.

Mr. Withers: You mean the lack of roads.

Miss HOLMAN: That is so. Some of them are mere bush tracks. During the last 12 months an application was made for assistance for a road constructed by the people themselves from Dandalup to the railway mill. We did not get the assistance we sought. That road cuts off about eight miles, and its use would save a good deal of time. As an instance to show what this means, a little while ago a shafting was broken at the railway mill. They rushed it through the bush and had it back

from Midland Junction completely repaired in a day and a half. The men did not lose any time during the interval, but the mill was stopped. Had the shorter road not been available, the work could not have been carried out in so short a time. Another road requiring attention is that from Nanga Brook and Wuraming to Dwellingup. Under existing conditions any person travelling over such roads in order to go to the hospital at Dwellingup must suffer greatly. I have been over the road and know what it is like. Hoffman is a centre that is absolutely isolated. There is no way by which access can be gained to the place except by rail. The need for a road there is imperative. Holyoake Landing is another isolated centre, and if it were connected up by road with the Albany-road, some 10 miles would be cut off. I hope that the Government will do something to provide road facilities in the interests of those engaged in the timber industry. If the Government introduce a Bill to regulate the timber industry, one benefit will be the keeping of the machinery in order. There have been instances of faulty construction and faulty machinery causing serious accidents. In one instance the belt race was too small for a man to work in properly. The result was that a man was killed in that race owing to the belting striking the top of his head. There is practically no inspection of machinery in connection with the timber mills. The boiler inspector certainly goes through once in 12 months, but he does not inspect the machinery. There are many ways in which improved inspection would better the conditions and make for the added safety of the workers. During many years past, statistics have been kept in the office of the Timber Workers' Union, relating to accidents sustained by those engaged in the industry. The percentage of accidents has run up to 25 per cent. of those contributing to the accident fund of the union. Last year the percentage was 19, which is very high. Most of the men in the timber industry are maimed to a greater or lesser degree because of accidents sustained in the course of their employment. The Arbitration Court does not make any provision for the dangerous nature of the work, and great toll is taken of the men each year. In conclusion, I wish to say how honoured I feel that the electors of Forrest have put me in the position formerly held by my father.

MR. WITHERS (Bunbury) [4.8]: I have much pleasure in seconding the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply, so ably moved by the member for Forrest (Miss Holman). I congratulate her on her maiden speech in Parliament. I also congratulate the Government on the successful results of their first year in office. The record is one of achievement. It is well known that the position at the end of the financial year was the most satisfactory recorded since 1911. That result has been due to skilful administration on the part of the Government, and also to the prosperity and progress of the State. Had it not been that the affairs of State have been in the hands of so able a Ministry, the deficit would not have been so small as it is to-day. The Leader of the Opposition may smile, but I do not think he would like to take over the reins of office to-day.

Mr. Corboy: That would be a change; he usually seeks them.

MR. WITHERS: By the end of the next two years we shall have made such progress that Opposition members will be only too anxious to cross the floor.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Make real progress and we will support you.

MR. WITHERS: The Governor's Speech was fairly long, but that was due to the work done by the Government last session. Perhaps when Parliament meets next time the record of work will be so lengthy that there will be no time for the moving and seconding of the adoption of the Address-in-reply. As to the financial position of the State, I come from a district largely responsible for our present position. It is recognised that the railway earnings resulted in one of the biggest profits recorded for years past. Then there is the revenue derived from the Bunbury harbour. During the last 12 months our exports of jarrah alone totalled 203,884 loads of 50 cubic feet each. That quantity has not been exceeded since 1913-14. The export of wheat this season totalled 52,002 tons, this having been the best year Bunbury has known. We realise that perhaps timber represents a wasting industry until such time as reforestation has had its effect. With the growing of wheat, however, the export trade has increased enormously because the south-western portion of the State has sent its wheat through its natural port, Bunbury. I trust that when the Narrogin-Dwarda railway is connected