

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 12th October, 1915.

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Premier: 1, Report by the Commissioner of Railways on the Working of the Government railways and tramways for the year ended 30th June, 1915. 2, Position of the Trading Accounts, report by Auditor General. 3, Public Library, Museum, and Art Gallery, report of trustees for year ended 30th June, 1915.

By the Minister for Lands: North Fremantle Abattoirs, audit of accounts.

By the Minister for Works: 1, By-laws of the Municipality of Leonora. 2, By-laws of the Cottesloe Beach Road Board.

By the Honorary Minister: 1, State Milk Supply, balance sheet and profit and loss account for the year ended 30th June, 1915. 2, State Children's Department, report for year ended 30th June, 1915.

QUESTION — BOXTHORN DESTRUCTION.

Mr. HEITMANN asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Is he aware that officers of the Agricultural Department are actively engaged in serving notices upon owners of land in and around Geraldton to destroy all boxthorn bushes? 2, Is it the intention of the department to take action in regard to Government reserves, some of which in the district are overrun with boxthorn?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1 and 2, The matter is under consideration, and the owners of private land infested with the boxthorn will not

be unduly harassed until the Government are in a position to deal with the reserves.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1915-16.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 7th October, Mr. McDowall in the Chair.

Lands Department (Hon. W. D. Johnson, Minister):

Vote—Lands and Surveys, £50,976:

Item, Extra Clerical Assistance, overtime, messengers, caretakers, cleaners, special allowances, temporary draftsmen, etc., including provision for payment to officers who may be appointed to permanent positions, and who when appointed, may be paid from this Vote if provision is not made elsewhere, £2,700:

Mr. ROBINSON: The items I take exception to in this particular instance are the extra clerical assistance, overtime, and temporary draftsmen. It is difficult, of course, for a private member not having an intimate knowledge of the Lands Department to say how much should be cut out of this vote, but in view of the statement of the Minister about the lessening of the work of the department, I cannot see why there should be provision for extra clerical assistance and overtime. Every hon. member would be only too delighted to pay overtime if overtime were warranted in connection with the sale of our land. Then why should there be temporary draftsmen if the lands are not being sold? I think these items are unnecessary. I am in no way hostile to the Estimates and I do not want to cut them down for the sake of cutting them down. I only want the item to be discussed and therefore I move an amendment—

That the item be reduced by £700.

Mr. WILLMOTT: When we find 17 inspectors, country officers, have been put off, and when we find that a large number of other officers are not required, it seems strange that such a big payment should be needed for extra clerical assistance and overtime. The services of the men in the metropolitan area in the head

office, it appears, must be retained at any cost. By dispensing with the men in the country we should be able, then, to dispense with the services of double the number of men who are supposed to be required to deal with their reports when they reach the City.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is impossible to state the exact amount necessary to meet requirements. This is a lump sum to meet emergencies. If an essential officer becomes sick—

Mr. Robinson: I thought you had a large number of men there.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: A large number who were regarded as surplus officers have been distributed amongst other departments. The Lands Department is going through a reorganising process.

Mr. Heitmann: Not before it is required.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is difficult to judge where we will land when the staff is being so altered. Many officers have been lent to other departments, but their items must remain on the Lands Estimates. If an officer falls sick, we cannot take his salary and use it to pay an assistant. Such assistance would be paid for from this item. It is possible that through sickness, say, in the accountant's branch where special work has to be done, application might be made for the staff to work overtime to catch up arrears. Members often call for returns which entail considerable work and occasionally overtime work is necessary to prepare them. At present there is no chance of temporary draftsmen being employed. In my opinion there are more draftsmen than are necessary, and much work now done by hand could be more economically done by machinery. I have appointed a board to inquire and report as to whether the staff of draftsmen cannot be cut down, and I am hopeful that considerable economy will be effected in the drafting room. Still there might be an epidemic amongst the men, necessitating the absence of several, and temporary assistance would then be required. If this does not happen, the money will not be expended.

Mr. Robinson: Would not £2,000 be ample?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That sum might not be sufficient and an excess would be necessary. This is objectionable and so we have provided sufficient to cover probable expenditure. I have a return showing that the expenditure from this vote for the first quarter of the present financial year has been £600. That would mean £2,400 for the year.

Mr. Robinson: Then you can easily keep it within £2,000 for the year.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I also asked for the items of expenditure and I believe there are opportunities for economy, but while we might economise on some items, something unforeseen arise and overbalance that economy.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Give us the details.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There are 32 messengers and temporary junior clerks. This seems an enormous number but the majority are juniors studying for the public service examination. Some have passed the preliminary examination and are preparing for the examination to qualify for vacant positions. Almost every week men are leaving the department to go on active service, and that makes room for the juniors. From the Lands Department between 30 and 40 officers have enlisted, and their positions have been filled from within the service. In some cases juniors are carrying on pending their passing the qualifying examination.

Mr. Robinson: Was it necessary to fill their positions at all?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It was essential to fill many of them. The point is we have not gone outside the service to fill those vacancies. Three temporary typists are employed but, with the falling off of work, I think economy can be effected in the correspondence branch. I am assured that this branch is particularly busy, and cannot manage with fewer hands at present. There are two junior draftsmen who are partly qualified by examination

for permanent appointments. These should be encouraged. Economies should be made not amongst those partially qualified, but amongst those who are fully qualified and can do other work. The payment for the cleaning of land offices in the country districts comes out of this item. These amounts make up the expenditure and I advise the Committee not to reduce the amount.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: When we provide an item, the danger is that heads of departments will see it is exhausted. We are doing the Minister a good turn by urging a reduction of this item. It must be apparent that there is an immense number of hands in the department and when we consider the provision already made for draftsmen, there is no necessity to employ extra draftsmen.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The Minister has tried to explain the item but he has not given the particulars. The remarks of the Minister seemed to indicate that this department encourages a number of youths and pays them in order that they might some day qualify as junior clerks, not that they are now required. If there is not employment for these juniors they ought not to be employed. I am not convinced from the explanation of the Minister that this expenditure is required. It might be cut down still further than that proposed. If there is a vote on the Estimates the head of the department will incur expenditure under that item without coming to the Minister. But, if there is no vote he must come to the Minister for an excess.

Mr. THOMSON: I support the reduction of this item. When economies have to be exercised it seems that the country is picked out. The country inspectors have been cut down and these officers have served a great number of years in the public service. The economies in the Lands Department have been effected at the expense of the field officers.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I was at a loss to understand why the reduction was so strenuously advocated, but I see what is troubling members. They do not object to some economies but to others.

and the member for Katanning has backed up the statement of the member for Nelson in attacking this item because the economies have been effected in dispensing with the services of certain inspectors. The Minister has done what is necessary in doing away with the duplication of the inspection of the lands. It is all very well for members to say they are out for economy. I do not intend to divide the Committee on this amendment because I do not know what is wanted. If we have a lot of luck we shall not spend this money. If the item is reduced by £700 it may be necessary to excess it. Because members are cutting down the item by £700 they are not effecting economy. This is purely an estimate and not a penny will be expended if it is not necessary.

Mr. GEORGE: The Minister has practically told us that whatever is done he has the power to excess and from that the Committee may understand that if the vote is left as it is and the Minister thinks that further expenditure is necessary he has the power to excess the vote. What on earth is the use of the Estimates being placed before the House and discussing them if that is the case? We are supposed to have Constitutional Government and the power of the purse but evidently we have not got it and the sooner members and the country know that the better.

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

Ayes	23
Noes	17

Majority for .. 6

AYES.

Mr. Allen	Mr. Munro
Mr. Connolly	Mr. Piesse
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Robinson
Mr. Jas. Gardiner	Mr. Smith
Mr. George	Mr. Taylor
Mr. Gilchrist	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Verrard
Mr. Hardwick	Mr. Wansbrough
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Johnston	Mr. F. Wilson
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Male
Mr. Mitchell	

(Teller).

Noss.

Mr. Angulo	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Carpenter	Mr. O'Loughlin
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Collier	Mr. B. J. Stubbs
Mr. Foley	Mr. Thomas
Mr. Green	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Heilmann	Mr. Walker
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Bolton
Mr. Johnson	(Teller).

Amendment thus passed.

Item—Record clerks (10), £1,605.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: This item shows an increase of £166. On page 51 of the Estimates there is a further item for records of £93. Will the Minister explain?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The item before the Committee shows an increase, but the other item which has been referred to is for an officer loaned to another department. Referring to the present item, I have to explain that last year one officer was absent for 11 months and another for portion of the year. If officers are absent for their own convenience, their salaries are stopped. The increase shown allows for the payment of the full salaries if the whole of the officers are employed for the whole of the year.

Item — Correspondence clerks (14), £2,690.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: I observe that this item has increased by £326, while one man less is employed. In addition, £891 is provided for transferred officers. I move an amendment—

That the item be reduced by £326.

Mr. ROBINSON: Is it necessary for the proper conduct of the department that there should be 14 officers in the correspondence branch, in addition to the temporary staff employed? These, I presume, are typists; and there must be a number of officers who write their own letters.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The permanent head assures me that the correspondence branch is fully occupied. Last year one officer was away for seven months, another for nine months, and another for 2½ months. If all the officers are employed for the whole year, the in-

creased amount of this item will be required. Hon. members desiring reductions should tackle one particular man and strike out his salary. If this amendment is carried, it amounts to asking me to pick out one officer and say to him, "Your salary has been struck out; you will have to go."

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Are you not in a position to say he shall go?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No. If the permanent head considers that there are too many employees in any particular branch, then that is reported to the Public Service Commissioner, who has to investigate and decide which man shall go. The Minister has no power to select the officer to be retired, unless an office is in the opinion of the Government unnecessary.

Mr. James Gardiner: Have not you power to say whether or not the salaries shall be increased?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes; but, as I have already explained, four officers were away for part of the last financial year.

Mr. James Gardiner: Does not that suggest that their services are not required?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: What class of reasoning are we coming to? Suppose that next year four officers owing to some cause or other take leave of absence, the expenditure under this item will not increase by £326. The permanent head assures me that not only are the permanent officers required, but that the temporary assistants at present employed are also required. One must be guided by the permanent head. If hon. members attack this item, they will be attacking a permanent man.

Mr. O'Loughlin: They should have come at the under secretaries.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Hon. members are attacking clerks on small salaries while passing by the more highly paid officers. Because a number of officers are grouped the hon. member tackles them, but he leaves alone the highly salaried officers.

Mr. James Gardiner: That is not fair.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is exactly the position. If you reduce the item we have either to abolish a permanent officer or reduce the salaries fixed by the public service classification.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: Apparently the Committee have no control over expenditure; neither have the Government. The Public Service Commissioner is the man who controls it.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Have a select committee to inquire into it.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: There is no evading the fact that we have one officer less this year, and £326 additional provision. The argument that the work of the office has increased is not justified by any increase in men.

The Premier: To get what you are after you should reduce, not the item, but the number of officers.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: I am still giving you more money to pay fewer officers with. You ask us to believe that the department is under-manned.

The Minister for Lands: No.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: That is what you are showing. I say it is over-manned. I am going to challenge every item.

The PREMIER: This is not a matter affecting the Lands Department exclusively. It affects a principle running through all the departments. The hon. member says the Lands Department is over-staffed. I do not think he should know better than the under secretary.

Mr. James Gardiner: I have had experience of under secretaries.

The PREMIER: I think the Committee will not be prepared to follow the hon. member. If they do, the first thing required is to repeal the Public Service Act, and place all public servants in the hands of the Government, and through them, of Parliament. The work has considerably increased in many directions, notwithstanding which the hon. member wishes to reduce the number of clerks. The Minister must rely on the permanent hand in regard to the over-manning or under-manning of the staff. In some of the correspondence departments, we have

been working the staffs overtime and not paying them for it. During last year we did not expend the total amount voted under any one of a number of different items, but in many cases we expended the equivalent in extra clerical assistance to take the places of permanent officers away from the offices. There is a possibility that during this year other permanent hands will be leaving the departments, but we cannot, in anticipation of that, strike out their items. If they go, temporary assistance will have to be called in to fill their places, just as happened last year. The item under discussion suggests that not all that was voted last year was expended; but it was expended in temporary clerical assistance, which is not charged against this item. If we retain the same permanent staff throughout the year, the vote will be expended exactly as provided.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: You have increased the vote by £326.

The PREMIER: No; it is only an apparent increase, as the hon. member will see if he examines it. Hon. members are asking us to do in this branch what has not been done in other branches.

Mr. Willmott: No other men have increases.

The PREMIER: They have. Every man getting less than £156 has an increase provided for him. It may not be paid, but it is only a matter of good conduct. Right through the Estimates, the automatic increases are provided up to £156. Even if permanent officers should go away, their work will have to be attended to by others. If the hon. member does as proposed he will bring chaos into the service.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member says that although there is one officer fewer than last year, we are paying more. If the hon. member thinks the work ought to be done by, say, twelve clerks, let him move to strike out two. The amount voted last year was not expended, because four officers were away.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: How did you fill their places?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: By temporary clerical assistance. There was

no payment for overtime last year. The officers who remained made up by overtime for the men who went away on military duty. We say we want fourteen officers and we say that they shall be paid the standard wage. If members do not want to reduce the standard wage they have to reduce the number of clerks. At the present time members are not indicating anything to the Minister.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: I want the force of what the Premier and the Minister for Lands has said this afternoon to be felt throughout the country; that is to say, that economies can only be exercised under the supervision or on the advice of the Public Service Commissioner. That is the position the civil service is in to-day with regard to the permanent staff. If that is so there is no good wasting any further time. Ministers can enjoy what extravagances they like.

The Premier: That is unfair.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: If that is the position then we have wasted our time; Ministers also are wasting their time. Let us hand the whole thing over to the Public Service Commissioner whether the service is under-manned or over-manned. I want the country to get the full force of that.

Mr. WILLMOTT: The Minister for Lands is trying to make out that we are engineering to prevent the civil servants from receiving the extra remuneration to which they are entitled.

The Minister for Lands: There is no extra remuneration. You are preventing me from paying a standard wage.

Mr. WILLMOTT: The Minister is trying to make out that we are endeavouring to prevent these men from getting £12 a year increase. Why did he not make this explanation before?

The Minister for Lands: I did make it.

Mr. WILLMOTT: The Minister did not make it until afterwards. We were not trying to cut down wages. The explanation that the men were away should have been made in the first place.

The Premier: There is no objection to the cutting down of items as much as

members choose so long as members know what they are doing.

Mr. WILLMOTT: I do not like the assertion that members on this side of the House are antagonistic to the automatic increases for the smaller paid civil servants. I am trying to point out where the Minister for Lands was wrong in trying to drag a red herring across the trail, when there is a very clear explanation afforded by last year's Estimates.

The Premier: It is a pot shot.

Mr. WILLMOTT: The Minister should have made his explanation earlier.

The Minister for Lands: It was explained in detail by myself.

Mr. ROBINSON: The Minister did not answer the question I put to him. I asked if it was necessary for the conduct of his department to have these 14 shorthand writers and three extra ones.

The Minister for Lands: I have already told you that the under secretary says it is necessary.

Mr. ROBINSON: In a later item we see that there is the sum of £6,500 provided for officers who have been loaned by the Lands Department. If last year, when there was a full staff, 14 shorthand writers were sufficient, why are 17 shorthand writers required this year when there is a smaller staff. I am opposed to the item in the absence of a satisfactory explanation.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The permanent head of the department has told me that he requires 14 permanent officers and in addition three temporary officers, making a total of 17. Three may not be required later and, being temporary officers, they could be dispensed with at any time; the 14 officers, being permanent employees, must be reported to the Public Service Commissioner before they can be dispensed with.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I hope the House will not reduce the item. During the last few years we have had one or two correspondence clerks in charge of the district survey offices. The Government have done away with these offices, have removed the correspondence clerks and have, therefore, taken away these

facilities from the people. To-day, if the people in the country want to deal with the Lands Department they have to do it by correspondence. More clerks will now be wanted to do the work in the head office than has been the case in the past.

Mr. GEORGE: The hon. member for Irwin referred to the question of the Public Service Commissioner, stating that it was practically useless to attempt to deal with the Estimates. If we reduce the work and it is impossible for the Minister to make any alteration in the number of men that are required without reference to the Public Service Commissioner, it is time the Committee considered the question of taking the whole position in hand. What is the use of Parliament or the country endeavouring to deal with economies when we find that Ministers in charge of departments are simply automatons?

The Premier: Why do members wake up to the position only when they want to cut down the lower paid officers?

Mr. GEORGE: I would attack the higher paid ones.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. GEORGE: This is the first item of the Lands Estimates that an attempt has been made to reduce and the Minister says it will place him in the position of not knowing where he is. Members on this side are not desirous of reducing officers whether they are high salaried or low salaried. All they are desirous of doing is to assist the Premier to put into practice a system of economy. Now he says he cannot economise.

The Premier: I did not say anything of the kind.

Mr. GEORGE: Then I misunderstood the Premier. The Premier and the Minister for Lands told us that it was practically impossible for them to exercise economies in their departments.

The Premier: I did not say anything of the sort.

Mr. GEORGE: And the reason they gave is that the Public Service Commissioner blocked the way.

The Minister for Lands: How do you account for the economy in the Lands Department of £11,000?

Mr. GEORGE: I am not satisfied that there has been that economy.

Mr. James Gardiner: The sum of £6,500 was transferred to another department.

The Minister for Lands: Cut out the Industries Assistance Board.

The Premier: Last year when I came down with a proposal to postpone paying these officers members were all up against it.

Mr. GEORGE: We are told by the Premier and the Minister for Lands that they cannot economise because their way is blocked by the Public Service Commissioner.

The Premier: Absolutely incorrect. I said nothing of the sort.

Mr. GEORGE: The Premier will have an opportunity of telling us what he did mean. I say the Premier said it and he says he did not. The Committee will judge.

Mr. James Gardiner: I thought the Public Service Act, when it was brought in, was a robbery of the public purse and I have never altered my opinion.

Mr. GEORGE: The hon. member had an opinion of it which it has been proved to be correct. It is enough to make a man's blood boil to be told that Ministers cannot do this and cannot do that.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Five district offices have been closed and that means that temporary clerks will have to be employed if we reduce this item. Correspondence must be attended to. If hon. members wish to economise there is no department than can so ill-afford to be reduced as the Lands Department. So far as I am concerned, I am satisfied the Minister has not asked for too much.

Amendment put and negatived.

Item—Accountant, £360.

Mr. GEORGE: This item shows an increase of £93. Is it an automatic increase?

The Minister for Lands: No, it is only shown as an increase because the officer was paid for only nine months last year.

Item—Inspectors of Lands, 9 at £240 (4 months); 6 at £204 (4 months).

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Here we have an item reduced to satisfy hon. members. I would like the Minister to state his intentions in regard to these inspectors, and as to whether he thinks he can have the work done for £1,128, whereas last year it cost £2,500. These inspectors do very necessary work and it is important that we should see that the improvements are made on conditional purchase holdings.

Mr. Smith: Is there any instance of a conditional purchase holding being forfeited for the non-carrying out of improvements?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Yes. The Minister will tell the hon. member that he regards the failure to carry out improvements as a more serious matter than the failure to pay rent, and the inspectors are appointed to see that the work is carried out year by year. These inspectors are needed and I doubt whether there are enough of them. This is the one item we cannot afford to cut down. This is not economy. It means also that we will get less railway freights.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have already explained that we have amalgamated the Lands inspectors and the Agricultural Bank inspectors. Previously we had the officers of the two departments travelling over the same country and doing practically the same work. Instead of two inspectors with their equipment doing the same work we shall now make one officer do it, and he will be reporting for the Agricultural Bank and the Lands Department.

Mr. WILLMOTT: The Minister tells us that only one inspector will be required to do the work of two.

The Minister for Lands: I say we are combining the duties.

Mr. WILLMOTT: Let me give an instance of what happened lately. An inspector of the Lands Department valued certain land in the Warren district at, say, £2 5s. per acre. The Agricultural Bank inspector recommended that no advance be made to the holder because, in his opinion, it was not worth that.

What is going to happen in a case such as that? Will that inspector, when inspecting for the bank, adhere to his ideas or will he turn round and say, "I made a mistake." That position struck me at once and I do not see how we are going to get over the difficulty.

The Minister for Works: Who was right?

Mr. WILLMOTT: I would be inclined to take the opinion of the bank inspectors, because they have something more serious behind them.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It is all very well for the Minister to say he is reorganising the department and saving money but that does not necessarily represent economy. It is his duty to see that the work is properly carried on, and that there are sufficient officers to do it effectively.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): You want economy, do you not?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Yes, but economy which does not interfere with efficiency. Does the Minister propose to find work for these inspectors in any other department? The member for Subiaco recently complained about putting men off in these bad times. There are many ways in which the Government can economise but they are apart from the Lands Department, and they are far removed from this item. No item is so important as this. The inspection for the Lands Department differs entirely from that for the Agricultural Bank. This scheme of economy will not work and the Minister is making a sad mistake in attempting it.

Mr. WILLMOTT: The Minister stated that certain inspectors were provided with motor cars. Will cars be provided by the Agricultural Bank?

Item—Roads and Reserves, Clerks:
1 at £300; 1 at £216; 3 at £204;
1 at £192; 2 at £180; 1 at £168; 1 at £120 (four months), £132 (8 months);
1 at £108 (4 months), £120 (8 months);
1 at £60 (2 months), £84 (10 months)—
£2,172.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: There is an increase in the number of clerks and an increase in the total of £385. Will the Minister explain the necessity for it?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Three officers were absent without pay for varying periods last year. Provision is made for two juniors who were brought in when the district survey offices were closed. Then there is the increase for those receiving under £156, which makes up the amount.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Is not there less work?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No.

Hon. Frank Wilson: What are they doing?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: These officers deal with all matters in connection with the declaration and surveying of roads. They are apart from the Works Department.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I cannot see why there should be extra work this year as compared with last year when the work was done for £1,787. Why should it require £2,172 this year?

The Minister for Lands: Some might be away this year.

Hon. J. Mitchell: The closing of the district offices will increase the work tremendously.

The Minister for Lands: A little, not tremendously.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Last year the vote was only £1,848, and I cannot conceive of anything which necessitates an increased number of clerks over last year.

The Minister for Lands: The increase represents two juniors brought in from out stations.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Why is there work for two juniors in excess of last year?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The increase is necessitated by the closing of the district survey offices. This will cause additional work in the central office in connection with the declaration of roads and surveys. The additional amount is due to providing for the full year's salary of two officers who

were away last year. It is possible some will be away this year.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: This increase is another sample of the Minister's economy. When discussing the closing of the district offices, I mentioned that the roads boards would suffer. The district offices could fix up matters relating to new roads and deviations at a minimum of cost but under the new arrangement the expenditure is to be increased by £385. If only two junior officers have been added to the staff, there can be no other reason for the increase. About one-eighth of the land selected in the first six months of 1911 has been selected in the corresponding period of this year, and there is, therefore, not the same work to be done.

Item—Computers: 1 at £312; 3 at £300; 1 at £276; 2 at £252; 1 at £240—£2,232.

Mr. ROBINSON: This item represents an increase of £2,232. Presumably this is connected with the new arrangement of bringing computers from the district offices to Perth.

The Minister for Lands: Yes.

Mr. Willmott: Does that apply to the following item?

The Minister for Lands: Yes, and on the next page of the Estimates the reductions are shown.

Mr. ROBINSON: What saving has been effected by closing the district offices if all the officers are to be brought to Perth, the correspondence staff increased and the same salaries paid as before? Surely it would have been better to leave these officials in the country where they could serve the people more effectively than in Perth.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: As I have previously stated, I am prepared to admit that I am quite convinced we have too many draftsmen and too many computers. On closing the district lands offices, we brought in the draftsmen and computers to the central office. I preferred that course, as a fairer and more reasonable one, to that of dismissing these officers. The whole matter is now being reconsidered. I may say that in my desire for reduction

I met with no assistance from the administrative officers, who were of opinion that the staff was not too large. In fact, it was urged that the staff was being unduly reduced owing to some of the draftsmen having been lent to other departments to assist in clerical work. I have appointed a board to go into the matter of reduction of the staff, and the personnel of that board was recommended by the Public Service Commissioner. I have not the special knowledge which would enable me personally to reorganise the office. While these salaries appear on the Estimates, junior men and draftsmen and computers of not the highest standing have been loaned to other departments for clerical work.

Mr. Robinson: Have you effected any saving by the closing of the district lands offices?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Undoubtedly. The saving is £11,000 on this year's Estimates, and I think that before the year is out a considerable further saving will be effected.

Mr. Robinson: As regard the £6,500 worth of men transferred to the Industries Assistance Board, and so forth, do you propose to take those men back into the Lands Department when they have completed their present tasks?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. The Minister cannot interfere with individuals, and consequently those men must come back. Immediately they do come back, however, I shall report that the department is overmanned, and then the Public Service Commissioner steps in and recommends who shall be retrenched.

Mr. Robinson: When did you appoint the board, and when will they report?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I appointed the board about three weeks ago. As the administrative officers did not agree with me in my views as to reduction of staff, I thought the only way to bring about reduction was to appoint the board.

Mr. Robinson: Is the scope of the board particular or general?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: General. The personnel of the board in-

cludes the Government printer, the Government lithographer, the chief draftsman of the Water Supply Department, the chief draftsman of the Public Works Department, and one of the leading draftsmen of the Lands Department.

Mr. Robinson: If the board recommend reduction of the staff, you will give effect to their recommendation?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes; and if they do not recommend reduction I will argue the point with them.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Half the staff of the Government are serving on boards of one sort and another, in order to relieve Ministers of their responsibilities. Apparently the Minister will disband the staff of the Lands Department and then will find it very difficult to get men for the work when land selection revives, as it will do on account of the good season. Temporarily the Lands Department is overstaffed, but the staff should be employed on surveys in advance of selection, in anticipation of the demand.

The Minister for Lands: We have hundreds of thousands of acres surveyed now, ready for selection.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: But the Minister has not 100,000 acres of the best of our land surveyed. The land which has been surveyed is probably not the most suitable for settlement, and it is the most suitable that we want. It would be a pity to disband officials whom we shall very soon need again. It is not the fault of the officials that they are not fully occupied; it is the fault of the Government. My administration of the Lands Department was denounced by the present Minister for Lands because I had not a block of land ready for every applicant. From these Estimates it is plain that the Minister has effected no economy by closing the district lands offices. The changes he has made represent neither improvement nor economy.

Item—Draftsmen (18). £3,391.

Mr. ROBINSON: Last year's expenditure amounted to £6,843. Does this year's item mean that the same

men are receiving only £3,391. or has the number been reduced ?

The Minister for Lands : The number has been reduced.

Mr. ROBINSON : The next item contains 12 salaries. Apparently we have 31 draftsmen this year as against 43 last year. Are these the draftsmen and computers as to whom the Minister mentioned that some of them were not required ?

The Minister for Lands : Yes.

Mr. ROBINSON : It is in connection with these two items that inquiry is being made ?

The Minister for Lands : Yes.

Mr. GEORGE : Last year there were 43 draftsmen costing £7,047. This year 31 draftsmen are to cost £6,216. So, apparently, we have got rid of 12 men and saved only some £800. Am I to understand that is the position ?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS : The items provided outline the salaries paid in accordance with the public service classification. The reason why the items are comparatively high this year is that they provide for the highly paid officers, whilst the economies shown are principally as regards junior officers. The member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) has just taken me to task for appointing a board to investigate the matter. I believe that as the result of the board's inquiries great economies will be effected in the items on these Estimates. It is impossible to make reductions until the board has reported.

Mr. Robinson : Did you say the Public Service Commissioner was a member of the board ?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS : No. I said that the Public Service Commissioner recommended the personnel of the board.

Mr. Robinson : Is it not usurping the functions of the Commissioner ?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS : No. The position in regard to questions of this description is that we discuss them with the Commissioner and in this case, as a result, we decided to appoint a board of experts. The personnel was his suggestion.

Mr. GEORGE : Last year we had 42 officers, and the number was reduced to 31. Yet we have been able to effect a saving of only £621.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS : I cannot quite realise how it is that the reduction in the salaries is not greater. The salaries are identical with the salaries of last year, and the only explanation I can give is that eleven of the draftsmen provided for here were last year loaned to other departments, and full salaries have to be provided this year. To get at the position we must take the amount voted this year not from the expenditure of last year, but from the salaries provided last year. The hon. member should compare the estimated expenditure this year with the actual vote of last year. The actual vote then was £8,623, and the amount expended was £6,843. The recoup for the officers loaned runs into nearly twice as much as £844. It is brought to credit without being shown on the Estimates, but I cannot understand why £844 is shown when the item for the eleven officers loaned last year is not shown.

Mr. George : What I want to know is whether any of these officers are getting an increase.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS : The only advances given are the automatic ones, that is, for the officers drawing under £156. The eleven draftsmen who were loaned to other departments had their salaries paid by the departments which borrowed them, and the money recouped is credited up to this particular vote.

Item—District Surveyor, Bridgetown, £576.

Mr. ROBINSON : Do I understand from this Item and the two which follow that the Bridgetown office is to remain open ?

The Minister for Lands : Yes.

Mr. Willmott : You cannot help it ; if you knew the country you would not ask the question.

Mr. ROBINSON : I am wondering why special treatment has been meted out to Bridgetown. Why should the District Survey office there be main-

tained, and at an important place like Geraldton closed? Albany also has been closed, and that town has a very important district behind it. Why should Albany be closed and Bridgetown remain open? Is the Minister selling more land at Bridgetown, or is this one of the jokes of the Estimates? The office at Northam has also been closed. A full staff is provided at Bridgetown. Why, then, should all the others be cut out? A little while ago the Minister, referring to certain computers, said they were taken from the district offices. Am I to understand that they were taken from the closed offices and that Bridgetown is not represented among them?

The Minister for Lands: That is so.

Mr. ROBINSON: Again, do the district surveyors that were also referred to include all those other than at Bridgetown? If so I would suggest to the Minister that on the next Estimates Bridgetown be printed in red.

Mr. WILMOTT: I am surprised that the hon. member should question this item. During the drought which obtained in other parts of the State the Bridgetown district served as a pasture for stock brought down from the dry areas. It is because of the even rainfall, the splendid climatic conditions and the magnificent soil that steady business has been done at this office, necessitating its continuance. I am sorry the Minister should have been so grossly misled as to reduce the vote by £176. There is every reason why this office should remain open.

Mr. ROBINSON: I have expressed nothing against the district. I only desire to know why differential treatment has been meted out to Bridgetown.

Mr. GEORGE: I would like to know how much business has been done at the Bridgetown office during the past 12 months. If my information is correct, the land settlement in that district has been very small.

The Minister for Mines: That office has been surveying our timber areas down there.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The position is that the land in this district

has been closed from settlement for some time past, owing to the necessity for classification and for determining what land should be reserved for forest purposes. That having been completed, it has been possible to throw open the remainder, which was done quite recently. In view of this land now being open to selection there has been an increase in business, and consequently we decided to allow the office to remain open. If we find that our anticipations are not fully realised this office will be closed, the same as the others. We are not going to have offices anywhere which are not profitably employed.

Mr. GEORGE: The closure of the district offices was discussed in the Chamber a little while ago, when decided opinions were expressed as to the inadvisability of removing those offices. I then suggested that it might be possible to let some one officer visit these different places at stated intervals. I understood the Minister was going to consider it. Has he done so?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No promise was made that the suggestion would be considered. I defended the closing of the offices, and I think I convinced the Chamber that the action of the Government in this regard was fully justified.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: No.

Mr. Thomson: You did not convince me.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Of course not. However, the offices have been closed, because there was insufficient work to keep them open.

Mr. GEORGE: That was clearly understood as the view of the department, but the disabilities the closing of these offices would impose on settlers in the districts concerned were pointed to by hon. members and it was suggested that we have a travelling officer moving from town to town. It would be a great convenience to the districts concerned, and I think the suggestion might well be considered. If we cannot have the whole loaf, why not have what we can afford?

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: The system mentioned by the hon. member was in

operation for years, and was only done away with when the district offices were closed. Several towns enjoyed a monthly visit from a lands officer, who did a lot of business. The settlers came into these towns on the day the land officer was known to be visiting.

Mr. ROBINSON: I understood that the closing up of the land agencies in the various country towns would mean a direct saving, and this would be shown on the Estimates. I find, however, on perusing the Estimates carefully, that this is not so. Computers and draftsmen who have been in the country have been brought to town. In the case of the district surveyors, these too have been brought to town. We are, therefore, not affecting any saving at all in this direction. I find that we are paying the same salaries, and are keeping these men cooped up in the Lands Department doing nothing. I took it from the Minister for Lands that there was to be a saving of £11,000 by closing up these district survey offices, but cannot find it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I could have put these computers and draftsmen out of work, but they were senior men and I did not want to do that. I have a board now going into the question. The hon. member says that the district surveyors have been brought into town and that there is no economy. The economy is effected because we spent huge sums of money in contract surveys. There are none of these contract surveyors now, the staff surveyors are doing the survey work. The value of the work given to the contract surveyors during the year 1914 amounted to £7,017. Instead of contract surveyors being employed by the Lands Department to do the survey work, which was paid for out of loan, it is being done by the staff surveyors.

Mr. George: You ought to get a recoup.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member will see that at the end of the Estimates.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The work is not being done. It is utterly impossible

for the staff to do the work which was done by the contract surveyors. The Government are not surveying the same area.

The Premier: All that is necessary to be done is being done.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: All that the Premier thinks is necessary is being done. It has been shown that there has been no economy at all in connection with the closing of these district survey offices. The public are being inconvenienced and the work is not being done, and the State is losing revenue. I am sorry we cannot reinstate these offices. If we could add to the vote I am sure members would. The Minister would have us believe that these offices were opened without reason. I hope the day will come when there will be a change in the land policy of this country, and that the offices will be re-opened.

Mr. THOMSON: The Minister for Lands made a great point about the economy which was being exercised. I think the member for Canning proved that there is no economy. I will point out that the district surveyor does not get paid unless he performs specific work. Moreover, the selector has to pay for the survey. Are the Government going to pay for a man to travel from Perth to do a survey in a country centre, when already there is a surveyor living in the district?

The Minister for Lands: You are talking nonsense.

Mr. THOMSON: We think when the Minister for Lands says he is effecting economies that he also is talking nonsense. He has simply transferred permanent officers from outside stations to the head office, where they have no work to do. The Government have gone away from the policy of decentralisation and have brought everyone into the central office. This arrangement cannot tend to efficient or economical administration.

Item—Under Secretary for Lands (Senior assistant to), £480.

Mr. ROBINSON: The Minister in answer to the member for Katanring said that the saving to the department amounted to £11,000. So it does, but

may I draw the attention of the Committee to the fact that £13,000 is recouped from officers loaned to other departments, and from amounts transferred to loan, and but for that, which is not a matter of economy at all, the department would show an increase in its Estimates of £2,000 odd. This particular item is the first of a series of items which deals with the transfer of officers to other departments, and it is only typical of a number of items that follow. What other departments have these officers been transferred to, and are these transfers of a temporary or a permanent character, and are the Lands estimates reduced actually, or have we here merely a juggling of figures or of officers? Is it a saving or is it a paper record?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: This House has endorsed the Government policy of making special advances this year to settlers, amounting to some £800,000. Someone, of course, had to be responsible for the administration of that amount. Parliament endorsed a Bill for the establishment of a board. Surely no one expected that a huge job of that description would be carried out by just a board. It was recognised that the services of a big staff would be required, and the Government, instead of going outside the service for this staff, determined to draw on the various departments so as to build up the staff.

Mr. Smith: Instead of getting business men who were capable of handling the proposition.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: There you are. First I am taken to task for not exercising economy, and now I am taken to task for not going outside the service.

Mr. Smith: They are a lot of muddlers and they cost the country thousands of pounds.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Now we are told by the member for North Perth that the Government should not have practised economy.

Mr. Smith: I object to the selling of bran at a loss of £8 a ton.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: The member for North Perth in the journal

he has a lot to do with held forth considerably in April last about the need for bringing in fodder, and he took the Government to task for not importing it at a more rapid rate. Afterwards, when it was found that there was no demand for it he condemned the Government for having imported it. That, however, is by the way. We have manned the staff of the Industries Assistance Board from the Lands Department, and we have supplied from the Lands Department officers for many of the other departments. For instance, the Water Supply Department was short of draftsmen and we supplied officers from the Lands Department. The Works Department were short and the Lands Department went to the rescue. The Colonial Secretary's Department was short of officers and the Lands Department was called upon to supply them. The instructions are, however, that the departments which need the services of officers must first of all go the Commissioner so that he may ascertain whether there are surplus officers available. That has been done right along and in that way we have effected economy.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am not going to criticise the officers of the Industries Assistance Board because they have had an almost impossible task to perform. I understand that the board have now a staff of about 70, but if they had been given an adequate staff in the early stages the work would have been well done. The officials of the board should not be blamed for handling bran, wheat and pollard and other importations at a loss. I understood the loss was estimated at £50,000, but now I am told it will be three times that.

The Minister for Lands: Make it a million while you are about it.

Item—Draftsmen: 1 at £252; 5 at £228; 2 at £216; 2 at £204; 1 at £192; total £2,424.

Mr. GEORGE: Will the Minister tell the Committee where all these draftsmen are?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Some of them are in the Water Supply De-

partment, some in the Works Department, two in the Colonial Secretary's Department for special work, and one is in the Education Department.

Mr. GEORGE: In regard to the Colonial Secretary's office will the position there be of a permanent character, or are the officers only loaned for a time?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In that case draftsmen have been loaned to perform clerical duties because other officers were not available.

Item—Incidental, including postage, stationery, travelling and sustenance, transport, advertising, rent, and miscellaneous charges, etc., £6,200.

Mr. ROBINSON: This item of incidentals is always a mystery to me; it seems to cover a multitude of sins. Item 10 in these Estimates also covers incidentals and here we have another lot of incidentals, including postage and stationery, amounting to £6,200.

The Minister for Lands: Item 10 is incidental salaries; this is incidentals in connection with postage, etc.

Mr. ROBINSON: Has the item been sufficiently considered and cannot the Minister do with £5,000 instead of £6,200? I do not propose to move in the direction of reducing the item, but I am merely suggesting to the Minister that he might see the advisableness of reducing it. In 1914 the vote was £7,500 of which £6,653 was spent. Many officers have been transferred to other departments. The Minister has to pay officers £11,000 less than in the previous year and such officers would have assisted to increase the postage, stationery, transport, advertising, etc. It is fair that the item should be cut down.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We should take the authorisation last year, and bearing in mind that a number of officers were lent, we reduced the expenditure nearly £1,000. This year we estimate that we can reduce it another £453. It is impossible to say exactly what amount will be required.

Mr. George: Why not cut it down to £5,000? You can always excess it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But it is not right to excess an item. If the

full amount is not required, it will not be expended.

Mr. Robinson: Does that cover the cost of postage and stationery at the offices in the country? You have closed five of them down; surely their postage and stationery would represent £500 a year.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Although the district survey offices have been closed, land business has to be transacted just the same, and most of the business is done through the land offices and not through the survey offices. Many of the inquiries will now have to be made to the central office and probably the expenditure will be increased because, where a person previously could call personally, it will be necessary to communicate by letter.

Mr. WILLMOTT: A large saving could be effected in postage. When lithos. are sent out, it is doubtless easier to stick half-a-dozen stamps on the parcel than to send the bundle to the station and transport it by train at half the cost.

The Minister for Lands: You would be penalising the public because they would have to call to take delivery.

Mr. WILLMOTT: I am talking about the postage on parcels sent to officials in the country. When I was connected with the department, parcels were often sent by post at a cost of 4s. 6d. or 5s. when they could have been sent by railway for 3d. or 6d., and it would have been no more trouble to get them from the station than from the post office. If Ministers generally attended to this matter they would be surprised at the saving which could be effected.

Mr. HARRISON: The Minister has told us that the inspectors are going to inspect for the Agricultural Bank, and also for the Industries Assistance Board. Does this item cover those institutions as well as the Lands Department?

The Minister for Lands: No, purely the Lands Department.

Mr. HARRISON: Then how can the expenditure be divided between the different departments?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The inspectors will be under the Agricultural

Department. If they do work for the Lands Department, that department will have to recoup the Agricultural Department for it. A certain percentage of the officers' salaries and expenses will be recouped.

Item—Prevention of sand drift, £50.

Mr. WILLMOTT: Where is the sand drift?

The Minister for Lands: A portion of the vote is for Geraldton and a portion for Cottesloe.

Mr. WILLMOTT: None at the Warren?

The Minister for Lands: I do not think so.

Mr. WILLMOTT: Some of the best swamp land in the State is being encroached on by a sand drift at the mouth of the Warren River. An expenditure of £20 or £25 a year for the planting of marram grass would result in the saving of thousands of acres of the richest swamp land in the South-West. Thirty years ago the sand drift was 500 or 600 yards from the swamp land but the wind has caused it to encroach and cover the forest and it has now begun to trickle over the swamp land. If the railway were taken 10 miles further south, this land would be rushed at £10 an acre. From some of this land, without the use of fertiliser, I got 15 tons of potatoes to the acre and I know of no other place in the State where potatoes can be grown without fertiliser. Land of such quality is worth preserving when the cost of preserving it would be so small.

Mr. Robinson: Does the land belong to the State?

Mr. WILLMOTT: Yes.

Item—Surveys generally, £900.

Mr. GEORGE: Is this item intended for contract surveys or for isolated items?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We spent something like £11,000 last year on contract surveys, that is for work done by contract surveyors. We do not propose to spend that sum this year because the staff of surveyors will do the work, but it would never pay to send a special officer to do a small job when a

local surveyor could do it. Lately we got a little survey done at Beverley by a local man for about £5, whereas to send an officer would have cost three times that amount. This item is to cover all such small requirements.

Item—Wages—Surveyors' assistants, chainmen, and labourers occasionally employed, £4,500; less amount transferred to loan funds £1,900—£2,600.

Mr. WILLMOTT: The Minister will agree that this item requires some explanation. It shows an increase of £543. Considering that the services of so many surveyors have been dispensed with—

The Minister for Lands: No, the contract surveyors have been put off.

Mr. WILLMOTT: Any departmental surveyors?

The Minister for Lands: Two.

Mr. WILLMOTT: The district survey offices have been closed.

The Minister for Lands: The staff surveyors are doing the work which was done by the contract surveyors and which cost £11,000 last year.

Mr. WILLMOTT: I would like to hear the Minister's explanation.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Last year a sum of £8,000 was voted and £2,057 was expended. The saving shown for last year was a recoup because the Lands Department were doing resumption surveys for the Works Department, whose surveyors were fully employed in surveying new lines which are now under construction. After that, the Works Department surveyors were put on the resumptions. Therefore, instead of the Lands Department getting the recoup of last year, the full amount has to be provided this year. The Lands Department are this year doing by their staff the work that was done last year by contract surveyors, representing about £11,000. It is possible we may spend £900 under that head this year.

Item, Expenses incidental to surveys generally, including purchase of mathematical instruments, horses and equipment for surveyors, forage for horses, repairs to equipment, freight and carriage, travelling, camp, and sustenance

allowances, etc., £4,000; less amount transferred to Loan Funds, £1,700—£2,300.

Mr. ROBINSON: I do not think the Minister's previous explanation covers this item.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. The former item was for wages, and this item is for incidentals.

Mr. ROBINSON: I see the item is "less recoup from other departments for service rendered, £250." Is that a separate item from the recoup previously mentioned?

The Minister for Lands: Yes.

Mr. ROBINSON: How are these recoups made up?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The item of £250 is for resumption surveys carried out by the Lands Department for the Public Works Department before the latter took over the work.

Vote (as reduced to £50,276) put and passed.

This completed the Estimates of the Lands Department.

[Mr Carpenter took the Chair.]

Department of Agriculture (Hon. W. D. Johnson, Minister):

Vote—Agriculture, £47,407:

The MINISTER FOR LANDS AND AGRICULTURE (Hon. W. D. Johnson—Guildford) [9.23]: In introducing the Agricultural Estimates I do not propose to detain the Committee long. In order to economise time, which means economy of money, I propose to deal briefly with the department generally; and I can deal with the items as they come up. It will be noticed that this year's Estimates are in a form somewhat different from that employed last year. The change is due to the fact that the Treasury discovered that by grouping a lot of expenditure in one item it is possible for the Treasury to do with less clerical assistance. Hon. members will observe that last year's vote for this department was £120,753, while the expenditure amounted to £119,888. The revenue, including receipts from trading concerns, was £70,503. The cost to the

State of running the department, deducting the revenue from the total expenditure, was £49,385. This year we propose to spend, apart from trading concerns, £47,407, and we estimate receipts of £12,000, making the total cost to the State of running the department £35,407. The Agricultural Department manage a number of trading concerns, including the Yandanooka estate, which hon. members, I am glad to say, will have an opportunity of inspecting during the next day or two. The Agricultural Department also manage the Albany cold stores, the Government refrigerating works in Perth, the Kalgoorlie abattoirs, the meat stalls, the North Fremantle abattoirs and sale yards, the Midland Junction abattoirs and sale yards, and the Perth city markets. Not much new ground has been broken by the Agricultural Department, other than that broken by the various experts in their administration of their respective sections of the agricultural industry. The Commissioner for the Wheat Belt, Mr. Sutton, has been particularly busy by reason of the difficulties experienced by our wheat farmers owing to the drought. He has also been occupied with experiments at the various State farms. The Merredin State farm was made the subject of a public inspection lately, and I think it was generally admitted that that farm has given a good account of itself for the year and that the experiments conducted there will be of vast assistance to farmers on the eastern wheat belt. The State farm at Chapman is conducted on somewhat similar lines, and does for the Chapman district much the same work as the Merredin farm does for the eastern wheat belt. Then there is the Narrogin State farm, in connection with which is conducted an agricultural school, patronised largely by the sons of the men interested in our agricultural industry. At the present time the school has some 25 scholars. Mr. Connor, the Agricultural Commissioner for the South-West, has been busily occupied with the general development of the South-West—a very difficult task indeed, because the South-West is a huge area of country

where the cost of clearing and of farming generally is very heavy. The effect of these difficulties is that we have not as many selectors as we would like to see in that part of the State. The work being done at the Brunswick and Denmark State farms, however, is materially assisting those interested in intense culture in those districts. Mr. Moody, the Fruit Industries Commissioner, has, I think, after Mr. Sutton, had the greatest amount of worry during the last 12 months. The Fruit Industries Commissioner and his staff have been conducting a crusade against insect pests, and particularly the fruit fly. Undoubtedly Mr. Moody and his assistants have been especially active in this regard, and I think the result of their efforts has been to justify the policy of the department. Reverting to the Denmark State Farm, I wish to mention that we are erecting, and have now practically completed, a bacon-curing establishment. The object is to encourage the breeding and keeping of pigs on the Denmark estate. When the matter was brought under the notice of the Denmark settlers, they expressed the opinion that there was no market. We pointed out that, as everyone recognises, there is a very big market indeed for bacon in Western Australia, our imports of that article being enormous. We have now established the factory with the idea of starting in a small way at Denmark and subsequently extending operations so as to demonstrate that in Western Australia it is possible to produce sufficient pigs and cure sufficient bacon for the State's requirements. We are also arranging to start a butter factory on a small scale at Albany. This butter factory will be worked in connection with the cool storage at Albany, which is not patronised as much as one would like. The floor space is sufficient to allow of a small butter factory being started without incurring much expenditure for machinery or buildings. The butter factory has been started with the object of encouraging the production of butter and dairy produce, the breeding of pigs, and the curing of bacon. While these are

small beginnings, I am strongly of opinion that we should start in a small way. I think we are too prone in Western Australia to start in a large way and over-capitalise, thus involving ourselves in more expenditure than was anticipated at the outset. We calculate that some 700 cows will be milked at Denmark and that from these it will be possible to supply sufficient milk and cream to the factory at Albany when it is running. Our best policy, I think, is to provide for the 700 cows and then gradually extend. I have also turned my attention to the Busselton butter factory, which I regret to say has never been a success. The people there have never taken the factory as seriously as one would like, seeing that the State put the people's money into that concern. On investigation I learned that the holdings in the district are very large and that the settlers find they can make sufficient out of sheep without the necessity of taking up the more laborious work of keeping and milking cows. It is to be regretted, however, that a fine area like Busselton should have failed to make a success of a butter factory. The Government have called up the capital of the company, or, in other words, compelled the company to wind up; and I propose to find out who was responsible for the failure and who encouraged the Government to put money into it.

Mr. Willmott: It was a private company first, and we all did in our money.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: At the same time, I propose to find out whether it is not possible to make the factory a success. It has been running for some time, but has got into a deplorable condition. My idea is to find out whether it is not possible to give the settlers on the smaller holdings a little encouragement to keep cows.

Mr. Willmott: We are all getting too lazy.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I recognise that we have a great asset in the South-West, but it is almost heartbreaking to try and get that asset developed. The settlers who have good land do not seem to realise the enormous

possibilities of intense culture. They seem to take up their land and make sufficient out of sheep; and they simply say, "Well, I am getting enough out of sheep, and I do not propose to do any more." While we have that sort of feeling to contend against, we cannot expect to get such results from the South-West as we ought to get. Undoubtedly the South-West is the dairying country of Western Australia, and what I want to do is to develop the South-West in that direction. What influenced me largely in leaving the district lands office at Bridgetown was to get land selected in that district in smaller holdings and then endeavour to promote the manufacture of butter at Bridgetown. I do not wish to enter into much detail, but I have a very high opinion of the South-West and I look forward to the time when we shall be able to develop it to a far greater extent. I sympathise with Mr. Connor in his very difficult task of inducing the people of the South-West to develop their land in the way it can be developed. They do not seem to follow the example he has set at the State farms; but let us hope that the future will be better in that regard.

Mr. Robinson: Does he make the State farms pay?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He demonstrates what the South-West lands can produce and that success can follow the planting of certain grasses. Coming nearer home, the member for Swan in his speech on the Estimates made special reference to the need for the establishment of markets in the City. That has been the ambition of the Government for some time and we acquired a valuable site for the purpose. Mr. Hardwick, of the architectural division of the Works Department, was recently sent to the Eastern States to get up-to-date information in connection with cold storage and general markets. Alternate schemes have been submitted to the Government by that officer and they are now under consideration. I do not want to lead the Chamber to believe that we intend to build the markets immediately, but I want to show that we are getting ready and that as soon as

money is available and is cheaper than it is to-day, we shall have everything in readiness to start the work. Another matter which has received consideration is the potato regulations. For some time we have had regulations which restricted the importation of potatoes and also restricted the distribution of those which we produce in Western Australia. The restriction hampered the local growers to an extent, and of course prevented considerably the economical importation of potatoes. This matter is under consideration at the present time. Recently I had a deputation before me from the importers, from whom I received a lot of information as to their difficulties in regard to importation, and I am now in communication with the growers so as to get their side of the question. Then I will call upon departmental officers to prepare a report and we shall know whether the producer is getting the results that were anticipated, and whether the consumer is not being unduly penalised. The potato regulations have been in force long enough now to be reviewed and I am getting information from all interested. I shall go into the matter and see whether we can modify any of the restrictions. I have already referred to the work of Mr. Moody in connection with the crusade against the fruit-fly, and I have paid a tribute to the work he has done up to date. I believe, by the continuation of the restrictions, that we shall ultimately, if we do not totally eradicate the pest, modify it to a great extent. The fruit-fly last year proved very disastrous, but from indications there will be a vast improvement this year, and this will be largely due to the work of Mr. Moody and his officers. I might point out also that as a result of representations made from the Home authorities I have had expert officers going into the question of making land available for settlement to ex-service men after the war, or men who will be incapacitated during the currency of the war. A scheme has been prepared, and it is mostly limited to the South-East, by which we propose to suggest to the Home authorities that men shall be settled in

the Denmark area, as well as at Harvey, and in other parts of the South-West and we propose to offer the same facilities to those of our own kith and kin in Australia who unfortunately may return incapacitated, but who may be able to make a living on the land. A scheme has been prepared by the officers of the department in conjunction with myself. We now have it in order and it has been circulated amongst Ministers, and as soon as we can get time to devote to it Cabinet will be called upon to go into it closely. Then something practical will be submitted to the Home authorities. Generally speaking the work of the department is progressing favourably, although in the South-West there is not that progress that we would like to see. Still I think, by advertising and pushing, particularly in the Bridgetown district, we will get good results, and when we do, we shall have accomplished that which we all want to see, namely, the production of dairy produce for Western Australia instead of importing it from overseas.

Mr. WILLMOTT (Nelson) [9.57]: I have listened to the remarks of the Minister with great interest and I think anyone who has been through the South-West must agree that down there we have an enormous area of splendid soil and a steady rainfall, and properly developed we can place people on the areas in that part of the State not by the hundreds, nor by the thousands, but by the millions. The Minister has remarked on the richness of the land in the Denmark area. I can fully bear him out in what he has said and if service men are put on the land with a little capital and a knowledge of farming they will be bound to be successful.

Mr. Heitmann: They will want more than a little capital.

Mr. WILLMOTT: They will not want so much capital as knowledge, and the lack of that knowledge will prevent them taking up large areas. They should begin by taking up small areas and cultivate them intensely. There has been very good work done down there already. I had the pleasure of going through that part of the State a little while ago. I

remember, too, when Millars had their timber mills there, and it was indeed a pleasant change to go over the country and notice the smiling little farms dotted all over the place. They have gone in for small areas and intense culture with excellent results.

Mr. Heitmann: How many are making a living there?

Mr. WILLMOTT: I have not the slightest doubt that the Minister will supply the hon. member with the required information.

Mr. Heitmann: I found that almost every one of them had to take wages work in order to make ends meet.

Mr. WILLMOTT: And a very good thing, too.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: Cheap labour.

Mr. WILLMOTT: Nothing of the sort. These men earn the current rates of wages. There must be an idea, too, that men in a big way pay such farm hands less than the current rate of wages. At a place I visited the other day the owner of the property who, I believe, has spent £50,000 on it, stated that he did not believe in cheap labour. He declared that cheap labour was the dearest labour it was possible to have.

Mr. O'Loughlen: He does not believe in British labour.

Mr. WILLMOTT: I spoke to a number of the people there and they were all either Britishers or Australians.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Rottneest could tell an eloquent tale.

Mr. WILLMOTT: With regard to the cream factory at Busselton, I remember when it was first established some years ago. In the old days a large number of cows were milked in that district. We had something like 140 cows at our two dairy farms and we produced a big quantity of butter. There were no separators then, everything had to be set out in pans and one of our pleasant duties was to attend to the skimming of 80 pans. Hon. members can therefore imagine the amount of work there was to be done. Now we have separators and churns of the newest kind, milking machines and everything at our hands, and how many cows are milked there? One

would not find more than two cows milked on a farm: sheep have taken the place of the cows. Why is that? In the old days we used to turn out at 4 o'clock in the morning. I remember myself having milked 26 cows twice a day and I had the pleasure of milking 35 cows once before I got my tea. Can we get men to milk 25 or 30 cows to-day? This thing has been worrying me for years. Why should not the dairying industry advance? I have come to the conclusion that the reason is they can make a living too easily without it. We won't get them to take on dairying until they have to do it. There is another factor, namely, that until the last year or so the price of butter has been low. But this year it has gone up, and this has given an impetus to dairying, and even in the Bridgetown district, where it has been much easier to run sheep, we find small dairy farms starting up all over the place. But until they are right up against it we will not find people permanently taking on dairying.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Then the dairying industry is doomed for the next 10 years.

Mr. WILLMOTT: No, we only require three or four good seasons in the North to bring down the price of mutton to bed rock, and then it will pay to take on dairying down South. We do not get sufficient attention paid to intense culture. Those who have gone in for intense culture are the men best off at the end of the year. The Minister spoke of the potato restrictions. These require very careful scrutiny, because it will be found the market is so tender that the slightest thing upsets it. At present the dealers have it entirely in their own hands, and if an extra five tons of potatoes is put on the market, down goes the price.

Mr. O'Loughlen: What is the remedy, State control?

Mr. WILLMOTT: God forbid! However, I will leave it with the Minister, who is gradually becoming seized of the facts. At present I have sufficient faith in him. Of course there are two sides to the question, and the Minister must not do an injustice to either. The Minister

also touched on the trouble the Fruit Industries Commissioner has in handling the fruit fly pest. No regulations dealing with such a deadly pest can be too drastic. Anyone who has gone through the orchards in the hills and seen tons of beautiful fruit boiled down for the pigs when people in Perth are paying 6d. per lb. for fruit, will agree that the regulation should be made so stringent that the pest will be wiped out.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Why not have something in the way of jam factories?

Mr. WILLMOTT: You cannot make jam out of fly-infested fruit, nor can you make it out of good fruit while you have to pay the iniquitous price at present obtaining for sugar.

Mr. O'Loughlen: You cannot compete against Tasmanian wages either.

Mr. WILLMOTT: It is not so much a question of wages. It is the price of sugar that kills it.

Mr. O'Loughlen: They pay the girls in the Donnybrook factory three times what the girls in Jones's factory in Hobart are paid.

Mr. WILLMOTT: Orchardists troubled with the fruit fly are very much inclined to buck against the restrictions placed upon them. They ask, "Why should we be prevented from sending our fruit all over the State?" I say no inspection can be sufficiently strict to safeguard clean districts. In the far South the fruit growers are objecting to Harvey oranges being allowed to be sent down into those districts. I pointed out to the objectors that we have in our midst timber mills and other centres of population where people demand citrus fruits, and that we down there are not in a position to supply those fruits, and, therefore, it was only to be expected that the Minister would say, "Either you have to let the citrus fruits in from a comparatively clean district, or we will wipe out the restriction altogether and let the fruit come in from Perth and everywhere else." I strongly urged on them not to make too much fuss about the Harvey fruit coming in, because I knew if they did they would have the whole of the restrictions re-

moved, and citrus fruits would pour in from all parts of the State, with the result that we would be inundated with the deadly pest. I hope the Minister will see that the most stringent regulations are carried out, and that the officials on the railway are made to act up to them; that is to say, not to receive fruit not properly stamped. By doing this he will be doing good to everyone in the State. Then there is the question of vermin boards, and the destruction of wild dogs. I doubt if hon. members have the faintest idea of the enormous destruction of stock carried on by wild dogs in the Warren country and down in the Leeuwin district. There the settlers will testify that the dingoes, not content with killing the calves, are killing the foals, and killing three-year-old rickety steers. The dingoes travel in packs of from 20 to 30 strong, like wolves. They are not pure dingoes; they have interbred and are big heavy animals of undoubted fierceness. The destruction they are doing is appalling. A poley cow has absolutely no chance of defending her calf against them. When I tell you the dingoes are killing the foals you will have a faint idea of the damage they are doing. They chase a rickety steer down the hills until the animal falls, when the dogs immediately tear his inside out. Vermin boards should be established, and the Government should give pound for pound, because, except something is done in the near future, we shall not be able to keep sheep down there at all, or cattle either. We tried some years ago de-horning stock because we found they were so much quieter in the yard for milking purposes; but we have since found that on turning out these dehorned cattle they, like the poley cow, could not defend their calves, with the consequence that we lost enormously. From one herd 40 calves were lost in one year. The taking away of the subsidy has not had any good result. I will admit that it has been shamefully abused. I have known instances of tails being brought in from other States, and we have had to pay for them. I have known instances, too, in the northern portion of the State, of

the tame dogs belonging to aborigines being shot down in scores and payment claimed on the tails. Unfortunately we have had to contend against this sort of thing, but the position to-day is so serious that something must be done, or in the far South we will not have cattle, or sheep, or horses, or anything else, for the dingoes will drive them all out. In conclusion I notice that the Commissioner for the South-West is continually urging that we should have lime down there. We have been driven from Lake Clifton to near Rockingham, and from Rockingham we are now being sent on somewhere near Dongarra. Has anything definite been arrived at yet? It is high time something was done in regard to lime. If the Dongarra proposition is the best one, by all means let us have it from Dongarra, but let us have it from somewhere and without further delay.

Mr. FOLEY (Leonora) [10.0]: After listening to the speakers I doubt if much of the expenditure I see on the votes under the Minister for Agriculture is justified. There has been much talk ever since I have been a member of this Chamber about the potentialities of the South-West. We have been told that anything will grow there and that farmers can produce anything, but they have been going to produce it ever since I have been a member of this Chamber and long before. The member for Nelson (Mr. Willmott) spoke about the dim long ago when they used to milk 140 cows in the South-West, and said that there were now two cows there. The probability is that these two cows would be on the one farm. That allows not very many cows for the whole district. He said that in the old days there were cream factories in the South-West, but I take it there are still butter factories down there. I have said on a previous occasion that anyone going to the South-West had to drink condensed milk in his tea. The hon. member for Nelson said that after the old hand system had been done away with separators were obtained and that the number of cows had dwindled down. Incidentally the hon. member, I suppose, lost an honest living. That being so, I doubt

if we had had Estimates in the dim long ago, we would have seen in connection with the development of the South-West a sum of £756 put down for a Commissioner, then another £477 and another item a little earlier on the Estimates for £432 for another officer. I doubt if that money is being put to the best interests of the people in those parts of the State concerned, and I wonder what benefit we are getting from it. The hon. member went on to say that the land was so fertile that it would grow anything. I have been in the farming districts at a time when the people have nobbled a Minister at a railway station, deputationised him, and told him that the country was so poor that even the crows would not fly over it. When they had the Minister well primed up with their wants they would then have a banquet and I must say they treated Ministers and members well. They had a different picture to present at the banquet. Then the land was flowing with milk and honey, all over it was pictured the cream factories of my hon. friend, the member for Nelson, and the milk of these 140 cows would be flowing around. In fact, the country was shown to be capable of producing anything. Representing a goldfields district I have always been at a loss to understand where to find the logic of the argument. If the country is as poor as represented when deputations wait on Ministers, then I contend that it is not worth while doing anything for it. If, on the other hand, the district is as successful as it appears to be at the banquets, then there is no help wanted at all and the people ought to rely upon their own resources. I notice right through the Estimates in every branch of agriculture in the State experts are provided for. There are also assistant experts, and in some cases there are inspectors and senior inspectors, all in these stressful times. I want to find out from the Minister if it is possible, when we bring specific instances of small salaries before him—not to mention the crowd of clerks everywhere—if he will take into consideration the salaries allotted to these higher-paid officials and the work which they are do-

ing, and consider whether the employment of these experts is justified at the present time, and if these items cannot be touched as well as others which amount to very little at all. I think, with all the strides that agriculture is supposed to have made in this State, it is astonishing that we should have to pay for a Commissioner for the South-West, a Commissioner for the Wheat Belt, a Commissioner for fertilisers, a Commissioner for fruit industries, a pathologist and other officers in all the various sciences that are employed to assist the farmer. I want this Chamber to consider the question of whether the services of these gentlemen are worth anything to the State. The agriculturists should do something to show their appreciation of the services of these experts by cultivating their lands in the way that is indicated to them. The country districts and the State are not getting the benefit from the agricultural industry that some members think. My idea is that unless the people are willing to put into practice much of the scientific knowledge that these experts are giving them it is better for us to do away with the experts altogether. I hope when the items are being considered that members of the Chamber will consider this question and I trust that the Minister will give just as earnest consideration to the salaries of these experts as he has been giving to the lower paid civil servants.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER (Irwin) [10.8]: When I look at the large sum here for the purpose of developing agriculture, I frequently wonder, as the member for Leonora did, whether the State can be getting full value from the scientific knowledge of the experts, and whether the State is becoming richer as the result of the employment of these experts. I do hope from this out that the Commissioner for the Wheat Belt is going to be allowed to be the Commissioner for the Wheat Belt. We have in Mr. Sutton a man whose heart and soul is in the development of his work, but he has been kept on too many jobs in other departments because

he is a willing horse. The Government employed him as the Commissioner for the Wheat Belt. He probably has the best scientific knowledge of any man in Australia of the breeding of wheats, but we keep him in his office all the time.

The Minister for Lands: We do not.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: At all events he is kept there for a great part of his time. He is employed as Commissioner for the Wheat Belt and I say the sooner it is recognised that he is the Commissioner for the Wheat Belt, that he possesses a very great knowledge as to the manner in which the land should be cultivated, and as to the most suitable wheat for the different districts and the sooner that knowledge is made available the better it will be for the development of the wheat belt in particular and for the people of the country in general. Farmers will be able to put into practice the advice which his knowledge enables him to give them and they will thus be able to cultivate the land in a better fashion. Why keep the Commissioner engaged upon the Industries Assistance Board and other matters of that sort which keep him in his office when he ought to be in a position to be out doing his own particular work? We saw the error which was made in Professor Lowrie's case. Do not let us repeat it. If we are going to have experts to put into circulation expert knowledge—and that is why we employ them—and it is going to be of benefit to the State and bear fruit, it will only bear fruit when these men can go out into the districts and give practical demonstrations and enable the people to obtain practical advice. For goodness' sake, because we have a man who is willing to do anything that he is asked to do, let us not shoulder too much burden upon him but rather let us make use of the knowledge which he is so admirably qualified to impart. There is no disguising the fact that there are altogether too many wheats used in Western Australia. Every man has a fax in wheat. If we have a man advising us probably we shall get the wheat most suitable for individual districts. Where the areas have a light rainfall we know that they are trying to

meet the difficulty by getting a quick-cutting wheat. We want experts to give advice to the people, the advice that it is necessary they should have. We do not want wheat that does well in one district but will not do well in another district. We want the advice of this expert more particularly. I have no knowledge of the other Commissioners. I say that Mr. Moody and Mr. Connor apparently can devote the whole of their time to their specific work. Mr. Sutton is, however, a sort of jack of all trades and is drafted into numerous other duties just because he is willing to work. I hope the Minister will remember this and see if we are getting the best advantage out of these experts, and also to see whether this vote of £47,000 is giving the best return that is possible. We do not seem to be getting much forrarder. We are no nearer producing butter to-day in any quantities than we were 10 years ago.

Mr. George: That is because the Commissioner for that particular work is supplying milk for the lunatic asylum in Claremont.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: Are we any nearer to producing butter in any part of the State than we were 10 years ago? If we are not what is the good of going on continually paying these salaries and incurring all this expense? Are we developing our fruit industry? I believe we are. Is that development coming about as the result of the scientific knowledge we are placing at the disposal of the people, or is it a natural development? When we come to a vote as big as that, either the State has a right to believe that it is getting an indirect and direct benefit as the result of the employment of these specialists, or else we ought to get rid of them.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [10.13]: This vote is the most important to the State at the present time. I do not agree with some of the remarks which have been made by the member for Leonora (Mr. Foley). These experts of ours are, I believe, doing good work. I had the pleasure of being up at the Nangeenan farm the other day. This shows a very great improvement during

the last couple of years. It also affords a very instructive object lesson. We saw how the crops were being affected by a disease which we had not particularly noticed before. We also saw varieties of wheat which were being more or less affected, and which afforded a demonstration to the people in the surrounding districts of the way to avoid bad results, and also an object lesson of how to develop in this direction in the future. If we can get knowledge, without going to personal expense, from the establishment of these experimental farms, then they are going to be a saving to the country and a benefit to the whole State. We have at the present time the prospect of a very big harvest. Last April we went to the assistance of a great number of farmers and through that assistance a large area has been put under crop. The result of that is that we will have what appears to be an abundant harvest. But what is going to be the position of the farmers after it has been marketed? The cost of putting that wheat on the market after paying freight, insurance, and other charges, will be such that it will be questionable whether the farmer will have anything with which to carry on. There is one phase that I think ought to be taken up by the merchants of Perth, because although the farmers suffer directly, the traders and the people throughout the State will suffer indirectly. I asked a question about chaff jutes, in regard to which farmers stand to lose £91,000. The farmers cannot afford such a loss, and the position is likely to be accentuated by the jutes being higher in value. I am given to understand that one of the early crops had to be cut for hay, and that it took three dozen bags per ton. That means that the jutes will cost £1 a ton. The result is that the chaff will hardly pay to harvest, and to put on the market. It will also mean that the State cannot expect to be recouped for the assistance it has rendered. I want the Minister to realise what the farmers are actually losing in this particular direction, and we all know that the State cannot afford to let the farmers suffer a loss. Another point I

wish to touch upon is in regard to the manufacture of butter. What have we done? My firm conviction is that if the same amount of ability had been displayed and capital spent in other parts of the State, outside the South-Western area, we would have produced more than enough butter for our own consumption. My opinion is that if the primary producer saw that he was going to make more money out of butter he would soon embark on that industry. It has to be remembered, however, that the making of butter involves working not six days a week but seven days a week, and from early morning until nightfall. We know that the cows have to be milked regularly, and they have to be kept in good condition otherwise we will not get a good flow of milk. In the South-West a lot of money has been spent, but what is the result of it all? We also have an expert. I was at Busselton over 16 years ago, and there was a butter factory in existence then. On the occasion of a recent visit I was told that there were not one-fifth of the cattle at Busselton to-day that were to be seen there 15 years ago. I think that the attention of our expert ought to be directed to some other parts of the State. There were 22 exhibits of butter at Tamuin recently, and the exhibitor who won there took first prize at the Royal Show, where there were only five exhibits. We shall whip the South-West in our areas if the South-West is not careful. The cost of clearing land in the South-West is a big handicap. If it requires £30 an acre to do that work, a man's capital soon becomes exhausted. Dairying on modern lines could be carried on between Toodyay and Beverley for considerably less than it takes to clear the land in the South-West. Our expert should turn his attention to those parts of the State where ensilage can be made, and where dairying could be carried out on a cheaper basis.

Mr. Thomson: Have you ever invited him to your district?

Mr. HARRISON: I have always been under the impression that he is the Commissioner for the South-West, and my district is not in the South-Western area.

Mr. Thomson: He has been in my district.

Mr. HARRISON: I do not think he should confine his attention entirely to the South-west. His field ought to be wide, and he ought to investigate the possibilities of those parts of the State where the land is good and where there is an adequate water supply. There is room for improvement in this department, because if we confine our attentions to the South-West the proposition of dairying will be a very slow one. Primary production should be stimulated, and if we can do that with the aid of this vote it will be the best we shall have passed.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam) [10.25]: I would like to hear from the Minister whether it is possible for private shippers to charter apart from the Government. The Minister went to the East and told us on his return that the Government had arranged to do the shipping for the wheat growers of Australia. He told us also that two firms had been engaged to carry out this work, and they were going to charge five per cent. for their trouble. I have been wondering if the people realise whether it would be right to make the best terms for themselves, notwithstanding this arrangement. I believe that the merchants can take any freight offering. I think it would be well for the Minister to make it clear to the public that there is no occasion to pay this five per cent. to the Federal authorities, and that there is no occasion to take the Federal authorities 95s. freight. I think there ought to be competition, even in these times of short tonnage. I want the Minister to say just what the position is. If our crop will be what we expect it to be, this five per cent. will amount to something that will astonish even the member for Subiaco (Mr. B. J. Stubbs). A good deal has been said about agricultural development. It is all very well for the member for Leonora (Mr. Foley) to talk about butter factories in the South-west, and the possibility of dairying down there, but even in this House we find men who are prepared to decry this industry. The hon. member for Fremantle the other night said that a great many

men had been ruined by having been put on the land. He thought the last thing a man should engage in was agriculture. When Fremantle was in dire trouble, did I not take the unemployed of the town and put them on the land? I believe they are doing pretty well to-day. Yet the member for Fremantle decries agriculture. But we must have increased population. We must have hundreds of thousands of people to do any good, especially in the South-West. In this country we have many men who can help us. In the University we have Professor Paterson, and I believe the Minister has arranged for him to assist with demonstrations. If he is listened to he will do a great deal of good. There is no doubt about his ability, and he will be a successful adviser.

Mr. Foley: What good will listening to him do?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I do not know what good it would do the hon. member; it would do me a great amount of good, and also other people who listened intelligently. What more could 300,000 people do than they are doing? I agree with the member for Irwin (Mr. James Gardiner) that Mr. Sutton should be allowed to attend to the wheat farmers. The other commissioners are doing good work in accordance with their opportunities. When dairying comes to be established in the South-West there will be a great deal to be done.

Mr. Foley: Since the Commissioner for the South-West came to this State we have imported more dairy produce than ever before.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I know we are importing a great deal of produce, but I do not know that Mr. Connor could have done more than he has with the money at his disposal. More money will be found for him in time. The South-West is receiving a great deal of attention, and I think it has developed very rapidly.

Mr. Foley: How much work is there for the irrigation expert?

The Minister for Mines: I am spending £40,000 on irrigation at the Harvey this year.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: And, apart from big schemes, some 300 people are at work to-day on small projects. Encouragement should be given to every form of production. We have heard something of the need for lime. I doubt if the Minister can profitably take lime from Dongarra to Busselton. The Minister spoke of the potato regulations. I hear that blight has made its appearance in the South-West. If that is so, the regulations will no longer be required. If the Minister listens to the importers he will very soon have his regulations set aside. I am glad to hear a decent word for Denmark at last. Denmark and the whole of the South-West should receive attention. We must have drainage and lime and clearing by tractor and special settlement, and we must bring in cattle in large numbers. I hope we shall hear nothing further against agriculture from the member for Fremantle (Mr. Carpenter) now that I have reminded him of the success of that settlement which absorbed so many of the people of Fremantle. I hope also that the Minister will see that the various experts do the work we brought them here to do.

Mr. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington) [10.38]: I hope the Minister will give those experts proper opportunity of doing their work. Take Mr. Connor, the Commissioner for the South-West; his principal work at present consists in looking after the dairy farm at Claremont.

The Minister for Lands: He never touches it.

Mr. GEORGE: Well, it is very little we see of him in the South-West. I know Mr. Connor had a great deal to do with the establishment of the Claremont dairy farm.

The Minister for Lands: He advised at the start; that was all.

Mr. GEORGE: He must have done more than that. At all events the people down the South-West would like to know what has become of their Commissioner. They have not seen him for some time; they know him to be a man of exceptional vigour, and therefore they feel that his

absence is not due to any fault of his own.

The Minister for Lands: He has a free hand to go where he will, and do the best he can.

Mr. GEORGE: I am glad to hear the Minister say that. I feel sure Mr. Connor has been engaged on something or other which will be disclosed to us shortly.

The Minister for Lands: I will ask for an explanation to-morrow.

Mr. GEORGE: In regard to the fruit industry, the fruit growers appreciate the efforts of the Commissioner but would like to see more of him. We have been called upon to pay for the registration of our orchards and we would like to know what is being done with the money raised from such registration.

The Minister for Lands: Extra inspectors are being appointed.

Mr. GEORGE: We would like to know where the inspectors are who are going to look after the fruit fly. We are anxious that this pest shall be stamped out as soon as possible. There is a State farm at Brunswick which has been a white elephant for years. During the last year or so, a demonstration orchard has been planted there, but this farm has never been able to pay expenses. Money has been poured into it by Government after Government; first one expert and then another has dealt with it, but the money spent has never shown a profit for the work done.

The Minister for Lands: Would you suggest that an experimental farm should be run for profit?

Mr. GEORGE: That farm is not an experimental farm in the proper sense of the word and the people in the district do not learn anything from it except what to avoid, and that is the indiscriminate expenditure of money.

The Minister for Lands: Then we will close it up.

Mr. GEORGE: This farm comprises some of the best land in the district, and with the appliances provided and the money spent upon it, that farm ought to be able to pay its way. The only experi-

ment tried was that of growing lucerne, and this has been ruined by the couch grass and has been a thing of the past for two or three years. There are some cows on the farm, but what else is there? Yet look at the expenditure on that farm! When money has been provided almost *ad lib.*, when the best of implements have been supplied and any number of men have been made available, the farm should pay its way. This farm has never paid its way, and, so far as I can see, it never will. The question of lime is another important matter. The land of this State is deficient in lime. There has been a proposition under consideration by the Government, not for months or weeks, but for years, to obtain lime from Lake Clifton and other lakes on the coast. There is a big deposit of lime which has been declared by experts to be absolutely right; it simply needs to be dug out and having been dug would be all ready for spreading on the land, and it can be supplied cheaply. The question of connecting these deposits with the South-Western railway has been brought before the House several times. I have given notice of a motion to discuss this matter, but the point is if the Government desire to help the farmers, we have the stuff there which they want. If we cannot build the railway, let someone else do it.

The Minister for Lands: That is under consideration.

Mr. GEORGE: During the last few years, there have been offers without number to build a private railway in order to supply the lime to the people who need it. The Government may be considering it now, but they have taken a long time to consider a matter which should have taken not more than a few days.

Mr. Willmott: The other Government considered it for many years, too.

Hon. Frank Wilson: No, they did not.

[*Mr. McDowall resumed the Chair.*]

Mr. GEORGE: I do not think this deposit was ever brought under the notice

of the previous Government. This lime is there, and the farmers and orchardists all over the State want it. There is an unlimited quantity, and it will provide traffic for the railways which could have done with such additional traffic during the last 12 months. The Government might say they have not the funds with which to build the railway. If they do, then for goodness' sake let someone else build it. Why should their objection go so far as to say—"We know you want the lime and ought to have it, but we have not the funds with which to build the line, and we will not let anybody else build the line, so you must starve." What would be wrong with the Government accepting a proposition for the line to be built to the standard of Government railways and the Government to have the right to take it over at any time at its cost. This would satisfy the people. They want the lime, but they do not want the Government to content themselves with talking about it. Why should the supineness of the Government or the denseness of caucus prevent the development of the South-West in this way? We want the lime for every possible purpose on the land, and I hope the Government will see that we get it. I should like to have some information from the Government regarding the rabbit-proof fence. It is proposed to spend something like £9,000 more this year on the upkeep of the fence. We do not wish to cut down the vote if the fence is getting into disrepair and this outlay is necessary to reinstate it, but in view of the amount expended on the fence in past years, the House has a right to know why such a tremendous sum is required this year to put the fence right. A party who knows something about the fence told me that this £9,000 increase was intended to include the fence in the North over which there has been such a lot of trouble with the pastoralists. If this is so the amount should not be included here. In the Estimates there is an item of £1,700 for the stabling of stock for Government departments. I do not see any recoup in connection with this item. Why should this

department stable the stock for other departments and receive nothing for it? I hope the Minister will explain this matter.

Mr. THOMSON (Katanning) [10.49]: Members representing agricultural districts are naturally interested in this particular vote. I do not agree with the member for Leonora (Mr. Foley) in his remarks regarding the experts. In these days farming is becoming a science and, provided we get the full benefit of the experience of these experts, such expenditure is money well spent. I think that in the Commissioner for the wheat belt, Mr. Sutton, we have a man who knows his business. I think too that the suggestion made by the member for Irwin (Mr. James Gardiner) is one which should be carefully considered, that we should find out the wheat which is best adapted to the various districts.

The Minister for Lands: It is already in operation.

Mr. THOMSON: I am pleased to hear that from the Minister. In connection with experimental farms, we hardly expect some of them to pay. I think the Government might to a certain extent try experiments in the various districts and try experimental plots in the different qualities of soil. That might prove a benefit to the particular district concerned. If our experimental farms, with all the appliances at command, are not made a success of they should be. The Government provide every convenience, every facility, plenty of money, and all the necessary machinery. If they cannot be made a success under these conditions it is difficult for the farmer who has not these conveniences to become successful. If at the State farms the stuff cannot be made to grow with all the conveniences at command, how can the farmer do so?

The Premier: Tests are made sometimes to prove that certain classes of wheat are not good. In cases of that sort there would be a loss.

Mr. Willmott: The hon. member did not say the experimental farms had to be made to pay.

The Minister for Lands: You cannot make a success of a thing unless you make it pay.

Mr. THOMSON: In regard to the dairying industry. I think it must be gratifying to the leader of the Opposition to find that the Government have copied another of his suggestions, or at least stolen one of the planks of his platform.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: I did not know he had a platform.

Mr. THOMSON: The hon. member knows all about the platform.

The Premier: There are no planks in it.

Mr. THOMSON: I am pleased to say that the Government have adopted one of the planks of the platform of the Liberal Government, which was then in power, to give cows to the settlers.

The Minister for Lands: Where are we doing that?

Mr. THOMSON: Members opposite ridiculed a good many of the suggestions or planks of the Liberals but they have adopted them, and are supplying the settlers with cows. I say this is a step in the right direction. I congratulate the Minister on his endeavour to start a butter factory at Albany.

The Premier: State enterprises again.

Mr. THOMSON: Probably it is a State enterprise. The hon. member for Forrest (Mr. O'Loughlen) interjected that we in Western Australia could not compete with Tasmania in the manufacture of jams. Unfortunately we in Western Australia are up against that proposition through Federation. We are not able to do the same as has been done in Victoria where they established the butter industry, and where they were able to give bonuses in this direction. We are not in a position to give bonuses. I understand that this is prohibited now by the Commonwealth Government.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: They can certainly stop any bonuses if they like.

Mr. THOMSON: And they would stop them very quickly. When we had preferential treatment so far as hard woods were concerned, and the railways charged a higher rate for imported hard

woods from the Eastern States, the Commonwealth Government stepped in and made us treat them on the same lines and carry them at the same rate as the local woods.

Mr. Heitmann: That would be quite different.

Mr. THOMSON: It is purely a matter of how the hon. member views it. If the Federal Government can do that on such an item as the carrying of timber on our railways, which must indeed have been a small matter to them, what are we to do when entering into competition in the butter industry?

The Minister for Works: What hard woods are you speaking of?

Mr. THOMSON: Blue gum, for instance.

The Minister for Works: There has been a lot of that here.

Mr. THOMSON: That only goes to prove my argument.

The Minister for Works: Did we bring in as much as £5 worth?

Mr. THOMSON: We have imported from the Eastern States for a period of seven months £218,083 worth of butter and from overseas £31,137 worth, or a total of £249,220 worth of butter for this period. I say that it is time we stopped that leakage. With reference to the remark made by the hon. member for Avon (Mr. Harrison) about the Commissioner for the South-West, I can bear out what the Minister for Lands said when he stated that Mr. Connor had a free hand. It cannot be said that my district is in the South-West, but we have had the privilege of receiving a visit from Mr. Connor and he gave two lectures there. I hope his visit will be beneficial to that portion of the State. I would like to congratulate the Minister on his endeavour to start a bacon factory.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: That is another of the planks, I suppose.

Mr. THOMSON: I always congratulate the Government when I believe they are doing right. These are one or two instances in which they are doing right. Unfortunately they are not always right, in my opinion. There are rare occasions

on which the Government are correct in what they are doing, and when they are I believe in giving them a certain amount of praise. I am pleased that the Government are endeavouring to foster the bacon industry. For a period of seven months we had imported into Western Australia £118,000 worth of bacon. This came from the Eastern States, but I believe it could all have been produced in Western Australia. So far as the dairying and bacon industries are concerned, when times are prosperous and men are getting a living easily, it is difficult to get them to tackle these particular industries. The butter industry was established in Victoria at the end of the boom when we had that great smash. I remember those times in Victoria myself, and I hope we will never have anything like it here. I had to walk about the streets of Melbourne and also through the country, and had to work for anything from 5s. a week and tucker. That is the time when the butter industry was started in Victoria. If we are going to have a slack time here—and I hope we shall have men coming out from the Old Country after the war—I trust that we shall be able to get men to tackle the butter industry. I consider that with the modern facilities which are at hand, such as milking machines, etc., this industry is not going to be as hard upon men as it was in the early days. I hope that in the not distant future Western Australia will be included in the States that are producing butter. There is, unfortunately, a great prejudice against local butter. In normal times the people who happen to be milking a few cows in an agricultural district get for their butter from the storekeeper 4d. to 6d. per pound less than the current price of imported butter.

The Minister for Works: That would be only at Katanning.

Mr. THOMSON: Possibly, but Katanning is an important centre. The storekeepers assert that they can only sell local butter for pastry butter. However, during the recent shortage, when the price was up, a Katanning storekeeper was able to send his imported butter to Perth and sell it there at an increased price, and in

the meantime he supplied his local customers with Western Australian butter.

Mr. Green: And did he get an increased price for that too?

Mr. THOMSON: Certainly. For my part, I prefer the local butter every time.

The Premier: You want to induce your unpatriotic storekeeper at Katanning to do likewise.

Mr. THOMSON: As regards the Fruit Industries Commissioner, I have had many complaints made to me with respect to inspection of fruit. There was an outbreak of codlin moth in my district; and in the case of one man, simply because he was within the three-mile radius of an infected orchard, though absolutely not a trace of codlin moth was found in his orchard, and though the inspector who packed the fruit for him admitted it to be one of the finest samples he had seen in Western Australia, yet that man was absolutely prohibited from selling the fruit in his own district. He had to send it to Kalgoorlie, with the result that for the fruit packed by Inspector Ramage he obtained a return of 1s. 6d. per case. The regulations should be administered with a certain degree of discretion. Certainly they pressed hardly on that man; and he was only one of many similarly prohibited in that district. Then as regards citrus fruits. Subject to inspection, oranges are permitted to come to my district from Harvey, where, admittedly, there is fruit fly. Newcastle oranges, however, are prohibited from coming to Katanning. Why cannot inspection be applied in the case of Newcastle? If fruit is allowed to be sent to Katanning from Harvey, why should fruit-growers at Newcastle, who are wholly dependent on their fruit crops, be debarred from doing likewise and be compelled to send their product to the gold-fields, where there is a glut? No doubt it is a good thing for our Kalgoorlie friends, who get cheap fruit. I agree that every effort should be used to combat fruit pests, especially in their initial stages; but, I repeat, the regulations should be administered with discretion. Like the member for Murray-Wellington

(Mr. George), I shall want to know from the Minister why on the rabbit-proof fence there is an increase of £8,775. In my opinion, if the money expended on the construction and the upkeep of the fence had been advanced to settlers for the purpose of fencing their holdings, it would have been far more advantageously expended.

The Premier: But then the settlers would not pay their rates, the same as at Carnarvon.

Mr. THOMSON: I know the Government have never let me off paying any of my just dues, and I do not think they will let anyone else off. As I said in opening, I desire to congratulate the Minister on having endeavoured to foster the butter industry. At the same time, I am afraid that his butter factory in Albany is a little too far away. He is, of course, not to blame for that. In my opinion the Albany cold stores are in the wrong position. Had they been placed practically in the town of Albany, they would have been a paying proposition.

The Premier: It would pay us to scrap the Albany cold stores. I think.

Mr. THOMSON: In their present position they will not, I fear, receive the support one would like this Government enterprise to get. There are one or two items on which I shall probably ask questions, but I wish to offer the Minister my congratulations on at least two of the movements he has initiated.

Mr. WANSBROUGH (Beverley) [11.9]: I suppose I must follow suit and have something to say on these Estimates. I shall not take up much time, neither shall I be at all caustic in my criticism. The first matter to which I wish to refer is that of inspection of fertilisers. I take it the item on these Estimates is intended to deal principally with the quality of fertilisers, and in that respect I consider the Government are doing good work. I should, however, like to see a little more attention paid to the weight of fertilisers as shipped from the works. I recognise that in this respect the recently passed Weights and Measures Bill will do a certain amount of good: but there has been

in many instances a large discrepancy between the weight of fertiliser as it has reached the farmer and the weight supposed to be supplied. I sincerely trust that in future more attention will be paid to that aspect of the matter. I regret to observe that the Estimates contain no provision for the establishment of an agricultural college. Not that I am a stickler for any large expenditure in that regard at the present time, but my own district has had a promise for a number of years now that portion of the Avondale estate would be set apart for the purpose of an agricultural college. I would like the Minister to make some pronouncement in that respect. While various other parts of the State have those advantages the central division has not enjoyed the privilege, and I think a small amount could well be expended in that direction. Another matter I wish to say something about is the wages of farm hands, and in that respect I would like to hear from the Minister whether he thinks he is getting value for the money he has been spending. I do not think so. Neither do I think any Government will get full value under the existing system of eight hours a day on a farm. The previous speaker referred to the rabbit-proof fence. I hope that portion of the increased amount which has been placed on the Estimates will be allocated towards erecting gates for settlers at various distances.

The Premier: We might as well pull down the fence altogether.

Mr. WANSBROUGH: I hope the Government will not adopt that attitude simply because in the past some careless people have left some of the gates open. I have been along the fence as much as anyone and I know of gross neglect on the part of some settlers. Whoever is responsible for this I would like to make an example of, and I would like to see someone put on to watch the gates with the idea of bringing the offenders to book.

The Premier: Do you not think that in the interests of the settlers themselves they should keep a watch over the gates?

Mr. WANSBROUGH: The settlers who live in close proximity to the gates do assist the department, but it is the gates which are far removed from settlement that are invariably left open.

The Premier: The settlers would help the department if they caught the offenders and enabled us to make examples of them.

Mr. WANSBROUGH: In regard to the fence itself, I know of an instance where in one locality the settlers have gone to considerable expense in helping to keep the fence in repair. I notice that the vote for the destruction of wild dogs has been reduced from £748 to £10. I would like to know in which particular area the reduced sum is to be expended. Between the two fences at the present time the wild dog pest is pronounced and in fact, with the exception of the extreme South-West, the animals are more prevalent between the fences than they are anywhere else. Another matter I want to touch upon is that of noxious weeds. I notice that a small sum is provided, and in that respect I desire to voice a warning. Our railway routes at the present time are breeding grounds for these noxious weeds.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Especially stinkwort.

The Premier: We are not warranted in spending money in eradicating stinkwort.

Mr. WANSBROUGH: Steps should be taken to force the people to keep their lands cleared.

The Premier: It is absolutely waste of money trying to eradicate it.

Mr. WANSBROUGH: We have not power enough.

The Premier: Not money enough.

Mr. WANSBROUGH: Nor money enough. I hope before the pest spreads much further that the Minister will introduce legislation to cope with it. There is no desire on my part to see the agricultural vote reduced. The subsidies paid to the horticultural and agricultural societies should be continued. It is surprising to me to find that the societies this year have been able

to do so well with their reduced subsidies, but it is the duty of the Government to assist them as much as they possibly can.

The Premier: If they can do so well under existing conditions they can do it always.

Mr. WANSBROUGH: What is fair for one should be fair for another, and we find that in other directions there have been no reductions.

Mr. PIESSE (Toodyay) [11.20]: We all agree that the officers mentioned by the Minister when introducing this vote are deserving of credit for the conscientious way in which they have worked, with, I venture to say, varied success. I propose to refer more particularly to the regulations alluded to by the member for Nelson (Mr. Willmott). He congratulated the Government, but I am sorry to say I cannot endorse those congratulations. Like the hon. member, I have an intimate knowledge of the fruit industry, and I regard the regulations recently adopted as being in a large measure farcical. They needlessly impose serious disadvantages on one section of the community. Those regulations prevent the dispatch of fruit past Narrogin. A line is drawn through Narrogin, and including the Harvey district, and across that line fruit suspected of being infected is prohibited from passing, the idea being to protect those districts from fruit-fly. But those particular districts are already infested. Harvey itself is an infested area. The clearing of those districts could be better accomplished by closer orchard inspection. The regulations will not ensure that protection which is so much desired, because fruit can be carried on the railway by passengers, and motor-cars convey it into all districts. Moreover, the fruit is sold on certain railway platforms to people travelling by the trains. Therefore, the regulations are not of much use. The restrictions are unfair, because extra taxation has been imposed, though I and others have felt that additional taxation was necessary to provide better inspection. The regulations are unnecessarily stringent and the object of it all

could be better attained by an improved orchard inspection. While citrus fruits will, if permitted, convey the pest into the Mount Barker district, grapes are almost immune from fruit-fly. The Great Southern is an excellent market for early grapes from the Swan and the Eastern districts, and I fail to see why that fruit should be prohibited from being dispatched down there. I quite realise the necessity of protecting districts like Mount Barker and Bridgetown from the pest, but this could be done without loss to the grower. I hope the Minister will revise the regulations to this end. It is necessary to provide that regulations framed under the Act shall be submitted to both Houses of Parliament for approval. I am afraid the Minister responsible for the regulations is not fully conversant with the circumstances. The object desired can be better accomplished by a more reasonable regulation. The question is a most important one. The Minister has a better prospect of success in fostering the production of bacon than in worrying about the production of butter. Notwithstanding all that has been said about the wonderful fertility of the South-West, the great cost of establishing the butter industry is a bar to its establishment on anything like extensive lines.

Hon. Frank Wilson: What about Gippsland?

Mr. PIESSE: Gippsland had the advantage of a suitable class of settler, an advantage not available to Western Australia. Gippsland had the advantage of having experienced people already settled in Victoria to take up the land and make a success of it. Here the opportunities are not the same. Butter will not be produced in Western Australia until the pinch of necessity forces people to embark on that line of production. Here the field is wide and the population limited, and until necessity brings its compulsion they will not give attention to butter production. Butter is essentially a necessary product, but there are other productions more profitable to the farming community and at the same time involving less labour.

r. GRIFFITHS (York) [11.30]: With one exception, practically every subject pertaining to agriculture has been touched upon by the various speakers, and I would like to refer to the remaining one. The cost of producing wheat this year will run out at something like £2 5s. per acre. Freights at 95s. per ton will amount to 2s. 7d. per bushel, selling and handling charges will amount to 5d. per bushel, railage 4d., bags 3d., and twine 1d., making a total of 3s. 8d. per bushel. This applies to settlers who are within reasonable distance of a railway, but those who are 20 miles or more distant from a railway will have to incur an additional expense of 9d. per bushel for carting, which will make the cost to them 4s. 5d. a bushel. The price of wheat in London recently was 52s. per quarter.

The Minister for Lands: It is 57s. now.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Taking the price as 52s., it works out at 6s. 6d. per bushel, which, after deducting the cost of production, 4s. 5d. a bushel, will leave a balance of 2s. 1d. per bushel to pay for seed, super, food, labour, insurance, rents, etc. In the district of Kuminin, where the settlers have to cart their produce for 20 miles, two estimates of the forthcoming yield have been given, one a 12-bushel average and the other a 15-bushel average. On a 12-bushel average those settlers will have 25s. per acre left after all charges are paid, and on a 15-bushel average 31s. 3d. to pay for the cost of production, seed, etc. These settlers have to pay extra cartage on their seed, super, implements, food supplies, etc., and there is this additional cost to them of 9d. per bushel for carting their wheat to a railway. I hope the Minister will endeavour to find a few miles of rails to help these settlers, as it would mean a great saving to them.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. W. D. Johnson—Guildford—in reply) [11.33]: There is room for a difference of opinion on various matters which have been discussed, particularly in regard to the policy we are pursuing respecting the State farms. These are the experimental farms and we cannot expect them

to be profitable. The profit we derive is what we save the other fellow. We prevent him from making mistakes by demonstrating that certain courses should not be pursued and therefore we ourselves cannot expect to make a success of the demonstration. It is useless for members to argue that we can make a profit from an experimental farm. The supply of lime to the South-Western districts is an important question. I appreciate the absolute necessity for providing a cheap and plentiful supply of lime. The Government are considering the question of the deposits at Dongarra which are said to be valuable, and we are considering a suggestion to exploit, by private enterprise the deposit at Lake Clifton. Regarding the remarks of the member for Toodyay on the fruit fly, I appreciate the fact that the regulations are inflicting hardship on certain growers. I have considered the matter carefully and I have told the Commissioner I am prepared to endorse the regulations he proposes provided he is able to show me results. After we have had these regulations in operation for some little time, it will be necessary to review the situation as we had to do in connection with the potato regulations. I agree that grapes are not attacked by fruit fly to the extent that other fruits are, and that there is not such a great risk of conveying the pest to clean districts through the medium of grapes. The matter of permitting grapes to be sent to the Great Southern districts from the Eastern districts will be investigated with a view to deciding if anything can be done to relieve the position for producers of grapes in the Eastern districts. Regarding the maintenance of the rabbit proof fence, members have stated over and over again that this item represents an increase of £9,000. This is incorrect. It is wonderful how members find an increase of £9,000 and overlook on another page of the Estimates a decrease of £10,000. The incidental vote is up to £4,000 but there are decreases in the various incidentals connected with the different branches of the department. The Treasury officials stated that it would be pos-

sible to economise if we grouped the whole of the incidentals. This has been done, and by so doing we have one item of £4,000, but if the items which were previously included are totalled, it will be found that the amount for incidentals falls short of the same item for last year. The item, maintenance for the rabbit proof fence, shows a reduction of £3,000. There is a reduction in the incidental items and there is a reduction in the items generally.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Why did not you put in an explanatory note? As it is, it shows an increase of £2,000.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Members have only to take the figures for last year to realise that there is a reduction. Explanatory notes are not necessary because members have only to glance at the Estimates to see the grouping and the consequent decreases.

This concluded the general debate on the Estimates for the Agricultural Department Votes and items were discussed as follow:—

Vote—Salaries, £16,375:

Item—Commissioner for the South-West, £756.

Mr. FOLEY: The Minister remarked that the Commissioner for the South-West had practically a free hand. I contend we are not getting value for our money in keeping this officer. The position is not justified at present and I move an amendment—

That the item be struck out.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There is a difference of opinion as to whether we require an expert in this connection. I think Mr. Connor's position is necessary. He is struggling against very great difficulties but the results to-day justify his appointment.

Mr. Smith: Has he got an agreement?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, he is under the Public Service Act.

Hon. Frank Wilson: It would be all right if you developed the South-West, but you do not do so.

Amendment put and negatived.

Item—Chief Inspector of Rabbits and Vermin Boards, £504.

Mr. FOLEY: This expenditure is not warranted, seeing we have an assistant to the chief inspector and an assistant inspector. It is a waste of money to keep an officer like him employed. I contend that if the people inside the fence are going to keep the rabbits down the assistance people are receiving from the chief inspector will not help them to any great extent. I move an amendment—

That the item be struck out.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Hon. members cannot strike out an item of this description. We have over £300,000 invested in the rabbit-proof fence. Surely hon. members are not going to take up the attitude that we must not have that inspection. There is an enormous mileage of fencing to be got over, and an enormous amount of capital of the State has been invested in it. It is absolutely essential to have a permanent staff employed in order to keep the fence in a state of repair. If the fence is allowed to fall into disrepair, all this money will be wasted.

Mr. Smith: Why has he got an increase?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is because of the reclassification board.

Mr. HEITMANN: I agree that it is hardly fair to wipe out a position of this sort. The time has come, however, when the Government should reconsider the whole question of the rabbit-proof fence. I am doubtful if this country is ever going to receive the benefit which was anticipated it would receive from this fence.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Has it not kept the rabbits back?

Mr. HEITMANN: I am inclined to think it has not done so.

The Minister for Lands: The rabbits are bad outside the fence.

Mr. HEITMANN: One can see them on both sides of the fence.

The Minister for Lands: Not to any great extent; you see them between the two fences.

Mr. HEITMANN: The breakages which have occurred in the fence through floods are quite sufficient to have allowed

millions of rabbits to get through. Rabbits have been in Geraldton for years. To have a man specially employed in going up and down the fence as a chief inspector is a waste of money to my mind. He does the ordinary amount of travelling that is done by each of his inspectors, and I believe that the work could be done by the Agricultural Department without employing a chief inspector. This officer was simply pitchforked in to an easy chair, and the position is a positive farce. He served a notice on the Midland Railway Company that they would be prosecuted because a rabbit was found on their land, which is about a million acres. Then he served another notice that a rabbit had been found on their railway, which is 217 miles in length. This department can be carried on with the inspectors who are actually doing the work without the services of the chief inspector. I suggest to the Minister to look into that branch of his department, with a view to effecting economy.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: This is a vast department to administer. The chief inspector has not only to supervise the fence, but has also to control his staff. He is a capable officer, and I suppose the fence has been more successful than any similar fence in Australia. Indeed, it is perhaps the only successful fence of its kind in the Commonwealth. This would not have been so had it not been for the services of Mr. Crawford. The department cannot be run without supervision.

Mr Foley: He does not supervise it; the other inspectors do.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I hope the vote will be passed.

Amendment put and negatived.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*Contingencies*, £31,032:

Item—Incidental, including postages, stationery, advertising, fares and freights, travelling expenses, head office generally, etc., £4,000.

Mr. ROBINSON: There are many things which could be explained in regard to this item. Last year the amount put down for incidentals was £2,300, and only £1,300 was expended, so that the vote

was £1,000 in excess of requirements. This year it is proposed to vote £4,000 for these incidentals.

The Minister for Lands: That is inclusive of many other things from other items.

The Premier: It takes in State farms, fruit industries, rabbit-proof fence, and stock.

Mr. ROBINSON: One wants alongside one when dealing with the Estimates, a Burrough's adding machine, and a shorthand writer and typist to give one the necessary information.

The Premier: This was arranged with the definite object of introducing economy.

Mr. ROBINSON: There is an increase of £2,646 according to the Estimates. What is the total difference?

The Minister for Lands: Two hundred and twenty-seven pounds

Mr. ROBINSON: Is that an increase or a decrease in the incidentals?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Last year's expenditure on incidentals totalled £4,227. Apart from similar expenditure, we have to face this year allowances in the shape of travelling expenses for extra inspectors appointed under the Plant Diseases Act. As hon. members are aware, in connection with that measure a registration fee for orchards was imposed, and with the revenue derived six or eight additional inspectors were paid. Last year's incidental expenditure included head office £1,354, pathological £46, Workers' Compensation Act £145, wheat £173, South-West £222, bonus to Pilot Miller £10, Berseem clover £179, subterranean clover £87, fruit and bitter pit £579 and £215 respectively, entomological £20, rabbits approximately £300, brands £6, and stock £891; a total of £4,227. We saved on this item last year, but we expect to save more this year.

Item—Wheat and dairy farms, including wages, £8,254.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Do hon. members seriously think that the maintenance of these experimental farms is any longer necessary in Western Australia? I am not dealing with dairy farms now; but

wheat growing has developed to such an extent that we might well curtail the expenditure on other experimental farms, I admit the Government were reluctantly compelled to establish a State farm on the Avondale estate.

Mr. Robinson: That is a commercial farm.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I am up against these commercial farms. About £60,000 was paid for the Avondale estate.

Mr. Robinson: Why did the Government sit on it for five years?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Because the Government could not sell it.

Mr. Robinson: They could sell it.

The CHAIRMAN: Where does the item of £60,000 for the Avondale estate come in?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: There is a wheat farm on the Avondale estate.

The Minister for Lands: The Avondale farm is under the Lands Department. It is included in trading concerns.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I am absolutely of the opinion that the time has arrived when several of these farms have achieved their purpose of demonstrating to the farmers in certain localities that certain types of wheat can be grown there, and I do not think the farms should be continued on such a large scale. The game is not worth the candle, on the same scale.

Item — Potato inspection, including wages, £800.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: What does the Minister propose to do as regards admitting potatoes into the districts east of the Great Southern railway, where potatoes are not grown, and, I fear, will never be grown on account of the frosts?

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: On this item there is an increase of £409. That, I take it, is for inspection of imported potatoes also. I was glad to hear the Minister say to-night that he intends to go into the matter. The consumers of this State have for a considerable time been paying very much more for their potatoes than would be the case.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am investigating the matter with a view to determining whether the restrictions on the importation and the general distribution of potatoes can be modified so that consumers will not continue to be penalised, but I shall not rush the matter. As regards the Great Southern districts, the responsible officers now admit that the distribution of potatoes there has been unduly restricted. A week or so ago it was decided that the distribution of imported potatoes will be permitted as far south as Narrogin and the Yillimining-Kondinin district.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Including Narrogin?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: In view of the Minister's explanation, which I was very glad to have, it is plain that so large an amount will not be required for potato inspection. I move—

That the item be reduced by £500.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member is asking me to prejudice, and I will not do that. I am investigating.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Why the increase?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: An amount of £477 was expended in this connection last year under "Development of the South-West." In point of fact, there is a reduction in the total. Moreover, if the inspection is not needed, inspectors will not be paid.

Amendment put and negatived.

12 o'clock midnight.

Item — Field inspection, including wages; port and market inspection, including wages, £3,768.

Mr. PIESSE: I would like the Minister to give us some information about the entomological item which appears here.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is not included in this item. We have already passed that item.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: Some consideration should be given to the men who are

engaged in field inspection. It seems rather hard to insist that a man shall shift round to different localities. A man should have defined districts and an inspector should have head-quarters where he would be able to make a permanent home. When they are removed considerable distances this often means a great hardship to them.

Mr. PIESSE: Although we have dealt with the entomologist, I hope the Minister will recognise the extremely valuable services this officer has rendered.

The Minister for Lands: He is undoubtedly a good officer.

Mr. PIESSE: I hope the Minister will show his appreciation of that officer's services in a practical manner.

The Minister for Lands: That is for the Public Service Commissioner to do.

Item—Destruction of wild dogs, £10.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I notice that this item has been reduced from £748 to £10. Will the Minister explain the object of this drastic reduction? The roads board conference recently protested against the abolition of any vote for the destruction of this pest. It has been the custom for the State to give a subsidy for the destruction of the dogs and the system should be continued.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I appreciate the necessity for coping with the pest, but, as the member for Nelson (Mr. Willmott) has pointed out, the bonuses paid in the past led to a good deal of roguery among those supposed to be destroying the dingoes, and in consequence the Government have decided on a change of system. Without any desire to evade our liability we propose to approach the roads boards with a view to inducing them to attend to this work.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You cannot help them financially if you have not the vote.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We will help them all right if they propound a satisfactory scheme.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Agricultural Bank, £11,913:

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I move—

That progress be reported and leave asked to sit again.

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

Ayes	11
Noes	19

Majority against	..	8
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AYES.

Mr. Connolly	Mr. Smith
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Mitchell	Mr. F. Wilson
Mr. Piesse	Mr. Gilchrist
Mr. Robinson	(Teller).

NOES.

Mr. Chesson	Mr. Munale
Mr. Collier	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. B. J. Stubbs
Mr. Foley	Mr. Taylor
Mr. Green	Mr. Thomas
Mr. Heilmann	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Walker
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Wansbrough
Mr. Johnston	Mr. O'Loughlin
Mr. Mullany	(Teller).

Motion thus negatived,

Vote put and passed.

This completed the Estimates of the Agricultural Department.

[The Deputy Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 12.20 a.m. (Wednesday.)