

# Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 1st November, 1932.

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

## QUESTION—NOOMBLING ESTATE.

Mr. BROWN asked the Minister for Lands: 1, What was the full purchase price of the Noombling Estate? 2, What was the value of the improved portion? 3, What was the value of the unimproved portion? 4, What was the average price per acre of the whole estate? 5, What was the average price per acre of the improved portion? 6, What was the average price per acre of the unimproved portion? 7, Under what conditions was the unimproved portion selected by the original holder from the Crown? 8, What was the price paid per acre to the Crown?

The MINISTER OR LANDS replied: 1, £32,602 2s. 2d. 2 and 3, The Land Purchase Board's recommendation did not differentiate between the improved and unimproved portions. 4, 30s. per acre. 5 and 6, See answer to 2 and 3. 7, Assuming that the unimproved portion refers to late poison lease 78/58, which contained 13,784 acres, this was granted at the rate of £1 per thousand acres per annum, subject to payment of the survey fee, the fencing of the land within three years, and eradication of poisonous indigenous plants during the term of the lease. On compliance with these conditions, the selector was entitled to the Crown grant. 8, 7.556 pence.

## QUESTION—AGRICULTURE, VILLAGE SETTLEMENT.

*Holdings at Greenbushes.*

Mr. WILSON asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Has any land been excised from

the State Forest at Greenbushes for agricultural settlement? 2, If so, will he take the necessary steps to have such land surveyed into suitable holdings for a village settlement? 3, Will he endeavour to place the new settlers on the same plane and conditions as the village settlement at Nanup?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: replied: 1, Parliament has approved of 1,400 acres being excised from State Forest No. 2. 2, Yes. 3, The matter will have consideration.

## QUESTION—GOLDFIELDS WATER SUPPLY, REPAYMENT.

Mr. PARKER asked the Minister for Water Supply: Was the capital cost of the Goldfields Water Supply repaid wholly by (a) consumers connected to it; or (b) the taxpayers of the State as a whole?

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY replied: (a) and (b) The amount repaid was £2,500,000, of which £1,088,512 was paid by consumers and the balance from General Revenue.

## QUESTION—UNEMPLOYMENT, SUSTENANCE WORK AT MERREDIN

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Minister for Railways: 1, How many cottages are being built for the railway men at Merredin? 2, Are they being built by sustenance men from Northam and Perth? 3, Are there any tradesmen amongst them? 4, What rate of pay is being paid to the skilled men and to those who are unskilled? 5, Is any camping allowance or district allowance being paid them? 6, Why were two local sustenance men, who had certain qualifications, first promised work on this job and later told they could not be put on? 7, Seeing that local sustenance married men have to go out of Merredin to do road work and pay 2s. 6d. per week for transport to and from it, will he take steps to see that the local men are given local work offering before outsiders are put on? 8, Will local plumbers, builders, etc., be given an opportunity to do some of the work offering at Merredin? 9, Is he aware that these tradesmen have been having a lean time during the past three years and that to import tradesmen to do local jobs is unfair to those

men who are walking the streets looking for work?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, Four. 2, The men were sent from the metropolitan area. 3, Yes. 4, Arbitration award rates. 5, Yes, tent allowance. 6, I am not aware of any such arrangement. 7, Yes. 8, Yes, provided they are on sustenance. 9, This unfortunate position is not limited to Merredin.

### BULK HANDLING BILL SELECT COMMITTEE.

#### *Extension of Time.*

On motion by Hon. N. Keenan the time for bringing up the select committee's report extended till Tuesday, 15th November.

### ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the undermentioned Bills:—

- 1, State Trading Concerns Act Amendment (No. 2).
- 2, Factories and Shops Act Amendment.
- 3, Fruit Cases Act Amendment.

### BILL—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY TAX.

#### *Third Reading.*

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	21
Noes	..	..	..	..	17
					—
Majority for	..	..	..	..	4
					—

#### AYES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. McLarty
Mr. Barnard	Mr. Parker
Mr. Brown	Mr. Patrick
Mr. Church	Mr. Piesse
Mr. Davy	Mr. Richardson
Mr. Ferguson	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Latham	Mr. Wells
Mr. Lindsay	Mr. North
Mr. J. I. Mann	

(Teller.)

#### NOES.

Mr. Coverley	Mr. Nulsen
Miss Holman	Mr. Slegman
Mr. Johnson	Mr. F. C. L. Smith
Mr. Kenneally	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Lamond	Mr. Troy
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Wansbrough
Mr. McCallum	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Millington	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Munste	

(Teller.)

#### PAIRS.

AYES.	NOES.
Sir James Mitchell	Mr. Collier
Mr. Doney	Mr. Raphael
Mr. J. M. Smith	Mr. Withers
Mr. H. W. Mann	Mr. Panton

(Question thus passed.)

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

### ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1932-33.

#### *In Committee of Supply.*

Resumed from the 13th October. Mr. Richardson in the Chair.

Department of Lands and Surveys (Hon. C. Latham, Minister.)

*Vote—Lands and Surveys, £19,358:*

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS** (Hon. C. G. Latham—York) [4.46]: I suppose no department in the whole service has felt the full blast of the difficult period through which we have been passing more than has the Lands Department. The work of the department has been directed particularly towards maintaining those engaged on the land and attempting to relieve them in whatever way was possible so that they could carry on the industry. There are some people who say that the Government should not press for payment, but in such times as we are experiencing it is necessary to attempt to collect all the revenue we can, and in consequence the officers of the department have been kept fully engaged. At the same time they have had to exercise discretion, and more discretion than normally has been required. The demand for land during the year did not equal that of the previous year, selection in the wheat belt being again limited. I think the Committee will agree that in localities remote from railways, it is often inadvisable when the land reverts to us to make it again available for selection. Probably that is the reason why we have so many farms at present in the

hands of the Agricultural Bank. Firstly, they do not offer any inducement to the investor, and secondly, from the point of view of policy, while the industry is in its present condition, it is unwise to place people on land so far from a railway. In the 3,500 farms area, a subsidy has been paid for carting wheat over a distance of 15 miles, because the Government felt they were under some obligation to provide railway facilities for the settlers in that area. The fact of having to pay that subsidy has induced the Government to discontinue making land available there. Instead, we have confined our efforts mainly towards using the land that we have in close proximity to railways.

Hon. M. F. Troy: When you say you are not making land available, to what locality do you refer?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Land outside 20 miles from a railway. During the year prices have offered little inducement for anyone to go on the land, but there has been fair activity in the matter of small areas in the South-West. Consequently we have turned our attention more particularly to the South-West. In that locality a man can provide some portion of his own sustenance. Although we have made land available there, neither the area nor the number of selectors has reached the total previously recorded. Applications received under the terms of conditional alienation numbered 1,298 for a total area of 517,243 acres. Taking everything into consideration, that is something of which we may be proud, because market prices have not been any incentive to people to go on the land. Pastoral lease applications numbered 66 for an area of 3,494,770 acres. People engaged in primary production in the southern part of the State are having a trying time, but I doubt whether their difficulties are equal to those of the pastoralists in the North. During the recess I had an opportunity to make my first visit to the North, and I am satisfied that very few people down here realise the disadvantages and disabilities that pastoralists in the North are suffering. In the Kimberleys, particularly the southern part of the Kimberleys, there has been a drought for the last three or four years and miles of country that we traversed carried not a blade of grass. In consequence the stock is poor,

and poor stock means no revenue. Pastoralists in that part of the State are unable to market any stock, except through the Wyndham Meat Works. The northern part has also suffered, except small areas conveniently situated in respect to the Wyndham Meat Works. During the year a fair amount of pastoral land has reverted to the Government, due to the quarantine restrictions and to the fact that financial assistance has not been available to those engaged in the industry. Some have had to restrict their areas, some have had to abandon their holdings. Later on it is proposed to ask the House to give pastoralists some relief by extending the tenure of the leases in the hope that new finance will be made available to those engaged in the industry. Even if it were a business proposition, the Government are unable to find any new money to assist those producers, and it seems essential to the welfare of the southern part of the State that the people engaged in the pastoral industry in the North should be maintained there. Applications were approved under conditional purchase alienation to the number of 1,226 for an area of 531,991 acres. Pastoral applications approved numbered 73 for 3,446,957 acres. The approvals were in excess of applications because some were standing over from the previous year. Although there were not many notable sales of town and suburban lots, some attractive sales have been made, particularly in the South-West and in the mining areas. Lots submitted by auction and sold numbered 459, and the amount realised was £9,987, that sum being £683 in excess of the upset prices. There have been no large subdivisions during the year: there seems to be no demand for them. A good deal of classification has taken place, mainly in the southern part of the State. The Crown land west of Mt. Barker has been classified, and the classification is being continued towards the Denmark railway line. The surveyors and classifiers will be engaged on that work until about May of next year. In that locality there should be a fairly large area available for selection. It is there that men are now being employed on clearing work. A close classification of the soil has been made, and the advice of experts of the Department of Agriculture has been secured, with a view to ascertain-

ing what the soil is suitable for. It is described as being very suitable for fruit production. During the trying period through which we have been passing, fruit for export has been one of the profitable lines. There seems to have been a ready sale for our apples. Last year there was a record quantity exported, and while I do not suppose we can over-supply the market—

Mr. J. H. Smith: Did you say there was a ready sale for apples?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, overseas.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Last year was the worst we have experienced.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have been informed that while prices were not so good as previously, the sales have been made and there has been the advantage of the exchange rate.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Half the growers down my way are ruined.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Prices have not been so good as before, but I have been informed that the extra yield per acre in the Mt. Barker district compensated a good deal for the lower prices.

Mr. J. H. Smith: One man sent away 700 cases of export apples and got a bill back for £35.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I suppose he shipped on consignment. The trouble is that the growers will not go in for organised marketing.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You talk about organised marketing and do nothing.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The subdivision in the area referred to will cover roughly 43,000 acres, and there will be 97 blocks which should be suitable for dairying, mixed farming and apple production. I have already told members that efforts have been made north of Albany to try out the country there. For a century that land has lain idle, but the local people have been very persistent in their efforts to have the land made available for selection. We have selected 20 settlers from Albany and put them on to blocks of varying types. I had the pleasure of seeing some of them during the week-end, and was more than pleased with the work that has been done. On some of the blocks the pasture has developed to such an extent that one would think it was third year pasture. No doubt the system there adopted of settling the land is the

right one, because it brings the land into production at the least possible cost.

Mr. Wansbrough: That was the land that the department said was not worth classifying.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We have had to fight down the prejudice against that land. The member for Albany visits that part frequently, and no doubt he will take an opportunity to speak of the progress made.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Where is it?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: North of Albany, on the Kalgan River, and towards Narrikup. We have been trying out 20 blocks, and the growth of the pastures is surprising. There is the advantage that the settlers on the blocks are the owners of the property. While we are paying them small sums of money, I am satisfied that if we made the ordinary Agricultural Bank advances the work would not be done as efficiently as it is being done. The settlers have built their own humpies, and they have an interest in their blocks, and I feel sure that they are doing what members desire men should do, namely, endeavour to get off the labour market and make homes for themselves.

Mr. Wansbrough: They are a fine body of men.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes; we were able to pick a good type. It has not been a question of taking any man who was offering; we have selected the men, and I venture to say that 70 per cent. of success is determined by the personal equation. I should like to acknowledge the assistance rendered by the Albany people in their support of the scheme. Their advice and knowledge were a great help to the settlers. Of the settlers we have on unemployment settlement schemes, there are 80 at Nornalup, 59 at Nannup, 22 at Albany, and 33 at Busselton.

Hon. M. F. Troy: Where are they at Busselton?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We have added a little to the new land, and settled them on the discarded properties.

Hon. M. F. Troy: What are you paying them?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Up to £2 a week.

Hon. M. F. Troy: On country that has been abandoned?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We cannot allow it to go back to nature. These people are producing quite a lot of commodities, and I hope in a year or two it will be possible for them to make a living. At any rate, they are earning their money.

Hon. M. F. Troy: No.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: At times it is impossible to suit the hon. member. I should like him to have a look at those blocks.

Hon. M. F. Troy: I have seen them.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am sure the member for Sussex will be able to bear out what I have said.

Hon. M. F. Troy: I would not take his word for it; I have seen the land of the hon. member.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am not responsible for his land. I hope we shall be able to utilise all the land on which we have spent so much money; otherwise it will undoubtedly go back. To the 30th June last we spent £2,474 on the 22 settlers at Albany, £5,277 on the 33 settlers at Busselton, in fencing and in some cases on supplying cows. In most of these places for every cow the settler runs we make a reduction of 5s. a week. At Nannup on the 59 settlers we spent £10,646. At Nornalup we have several people under the original scheme who are now Agricultural Bank clients, a mortgage has been fixed up for them and they are self-supporting. I believe that is the right method to adopt in settlements of this kind. The position is different from what it was formerly.

Mr. Wansbrough: It is a great pity you do not put some lime out there.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Lime is a good fertiliser, but the railway freight makes it impossible to supply it. Superphosphate seems to have been doing a good deal towards assisting us to recover the land from nature. Last time I was at Albany I was very impressed by the fact that there were no superphosphate works there, although two had been erected at Bunbury. A similar establishment at Albany would enable the local settlers to secure fertiliser at a more reasonable price. I suppose we can do nothing but build up the district so that eventually superphosphate works will be established there. Last year we put through a Bill amending the Land Act and reducing the pastoral lease rentals. We made this

reduction to the extent of £18,000, or 25.98 per cent. We fixed the rentals on the basis of the price of wool. As the price of wool fluctuates, so will the rents rise or fall. The Wandalong experimental plot at Dartmoor has proved a great success. We put in 50 acres of crop on unfallowing newly cleared land. We put the seed straight in and the land produced a 19-bushel average. During the year we fallowed some of the land, and I understand from members who have visited the place that the crop is a wonderful one. I believe this is one of the best wheat-growing parts of the State. It seemed to possess a natural mulch, which retains the moisture. Although very little rain fell in September, the yield for the district clearly demonstrates the type of land, and shows what the wheat production is likely to be in years to come. It is within 100 miles of Geraldton. I am sorry the market does not justify us in opening up this vast territory. The land was surveyed by my predecessor and is ready for settlement when required. During the year a soil classification was carried out by Dr. Teakle of the Agricultural Department. The Lakes Carnody, King and Camm districts have been overhauled as well as the Lake Brown and other districts. Reports from Lake Brown have been fairly satisfactory. The territory of alkali-affected land is not nearly as great as was supposed.

Mr. Corboy: What about the King district?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Wonderful crops are still being produced there.

Mr. Corboy: What does Dr. Teakle's report say?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: About 50 per cent. of the land is alkali-affected. The settlers have still considerable faith in their own knowledge of the country. Yesterday I saw hay 3ft. 6in. in height, and the heads were well filled and the grain was good. It looks as if this country will produce a great deal of wheat before it is badly affected.

Mr. Corboy: What are the prospects for a railway?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The prospects are rather discouraging because we cannot find the necessary funds. We cannot hope to buy rails with the money that is available, but I believe the district

justifies a railway. I refer to the Lake King and Lake Carmody country.

Mr. Corboy: What is the position of the settlers there? You said you would not release the other two Governments from their responsibilities in regard to the settlement.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am going to stick to that.

Mr. Corboy: They say they had nothing to do with it. You should make a statement.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I think I am speaking for the Government when I say we have no intention of releasing the Imperial or the Commonwealth Governments from their responsibility.

Mr. Corboy: They say they have no responsibilities.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I know. In the Federal House recently a reply given to one of our senators was that no agreement was entered into in respect to that settlement.

Mr. Corboy: No. They said they were not consulted prior to the settlers going out, and knew nothing about it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I admit that the documentary evidence may be misleading. I am of opinion that the people who went into that country went there with the knowledge that the Imperial Government were behind them.

Mr. Corboy: They went there believing they were going out under that agreement.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Certain agreements were cancelled to make way for a larger agreement. I have the report of the Overseas Settlement Committee for the period from the 1st April, 1931, to the 31st March, 1932. This report was presented by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to Parliament by the command of His Majesty in August, 1932. On page 27 it says—

An agreement dated April, 1925, with His Majesty's Government in the Commonwealth of Australia, under which that Government undertakes to raise loans not exceeding in the aggregate £34,000,000, including the loans of £14,000,000 provided for in previous agreements with the States of Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia for developmental schemes which tend directly or indirectly to increase the opportunities for the settlement of persons from the United Kingdom. No schemes have been approved under

this agreement since the 27th February, 1930, and negotiations for the termination of the agreement are now being carried out.

The agreements have not been terminated.

Mr. Corboy: Was this scheme established under that agreement? They say it was not, and you say it was.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There is no doubt in my mind that the State Government were asked to release them from the agreements they entered into for certain railway construction in order that they might carry out a bigger scheme, which was for 3,500 farms.

Hon. M. F. Troy: They advanced some of the money.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We have dealt with those Governments more by conversation than by documentary methods. In consequence of that it is very difficult to determine exactly what took place. I feel convinced that the representative of the Imperial Government, Mr. Bankes Amery, when he went there, encouraged the people to believe that the Imperial Government were behind the scheme.

Hon. M. F. Troy: They were behind it with their money.

Mr. Corboy: Some of the settlers were put off before Dr. Teakle's report was made.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The settlers were also led to believe this by the representatives of the Commonwealth Government, Mr. Gunn amongst others.

Mr. Corboy: Mr. Stevenson was with him at the time.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. Quite a number of Commonwealth officers visited the district. It looked as if they were behind the scheme. It was difficult to tie them down to say whether this was a scheme or not. The files do not disclose what took place at the conferences.

Mr. Corboy: What matters to the settlers is whether they are going to get a railway or not.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: This State is responsible to the people out there. I contend that responsibility ought to be shared by the Commonwealth and Imperial Governments.

Mr. Corboy: Suppose they repudiate it: what are you going to do?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not like the word "repudiate." I do not think any Government would repudiate.

Mr. Corboy: You suggest that they are repudiating.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I suggest that if they could get out of this they might do so. Three signatures were required to make the agreement, namely, the signature of the representative of the Imperial Government, that of the representative of the Commonwealth Government, and that of the representative of the State Government. Until such time as they get the signature of the representative of the State Government, the agreement cannot be broken. If it can be broken, it ought not to be. While £150,000 was found towards the investigation, it appears that just at the last moment the question of the suitability of the soil for agriculture was raised.

Mr. Corboy: Still, that does not answer my question as to what are the prospects for a railway for those settlers.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We intend to try to force the responsibility on the other two Governments, in common with the State Government. When the time comes that we can obtain the necessary funds, those settlers will have to be furnished with railway communication.

Mr. Wells: Do the other Governments disclaim responsibility?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, to a certain extent. At present a representative of the Imperial Government is in this State on his way to Canberra, and I hope to have a discussion with him on the subject within the next few days. I hope also that the representative will not leave Western Australia until the Premier returns. I believe there would have been little settlement in any part of the State had scientific men investigated the soils. In the Avon Valley there is a good deal of patchy soil, and I have no doubt that salt would have been discovered there by scientists. However, no part of the territory now under discussion is wholly affected with salt. The records for the last two or three years prove that the yields in this territory are above the average.

Mr. Corboy: The Avon Valley problems are not the same as those here.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: A man named, I believe, King, a farmer in that district, brought to me a sheaf of wheat which came from land that has been three years seeding; and he told me his average yield would be from 21 to 24 bushels. I may mention that he is an Englishman.

Mr. Corboy: That wheat was grown on giandt and mallee country.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The experts consider the land in question to be affected with alkali. The settler tells me what I have communicated to the House; I can only take his word for it. There is an impression abroad that the agreement has already been cancelled. However, if it took three signatures to make the agreement, its cancellation will take three signatures. Undoubtedly there is an obligation to those settlers. My personal belief is that a huge quantity of wheat and other cereals will be produced in that district, besides stock.

Mr. Corboy: But the settlers cannot go on indefinitely producing while they remain 50 miles from a railway.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have told the hon. member that I believe a railway will be built to that district. There is a survey going southward now. To-day it is difficult to get rails because it is so hard to find money to feed men out of employment.

Mr. Sleeman: You are only making the position worse.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am afraid it is useless to expect to please everybody. In my opinion the Government are not justified in expending money on rails until some method of dealing with the unemployed situation has been devised. In order to afford relief to the settlers, we have extended to ten years the period during which they will pay merely interest on survey, and not any part of the purchase money. At the end of that term we shall have some idea of whether the land in question is worth persevering with. The carting bonus is a matter which will have to be discussed with the Treasurer upon his return. I feel quite sure the settlers can continue to look to the Government for the same lenient treatment as has been extended to them hitherto. As to wire netting, 406 miles and 59 tons of barbed and plain wire were distributed to 120 settlers during the year, at a cost of £21,094. It seems diffi-

cult to-day to send out wire netting to settlers, because we are bound to pay interest on the cost to the Commonwealth, from whom the material is received by way of an advance. We know very well when sending out netting to the settlers that they will be unable to meet the payments as they fall due. Further, the Government have to assist the settlers against the ravages of the rabbits, and so the position is not exactly encouraging. During the operation of the wire netting scheme 8,969 miles of netting and 157 tons of wire have been supplied to settlers, at a cost of £411,592. Therefore the Government have done their utmost to help settlers to obtain netting at a price which they can reasonably be expected to pay at some time in the future. During the year there has been little migration. In fact, the only immigration which has taken place is that of children coming here under the Fairbridge Farm School scheme.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: Is that scheme finished now?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Not yet. The total of arrivals for the year was 93, and of those 93 there were 77 for the Fairbridge Farm School. An arrangement has been made at Home for a certain number of children to be sent out here annually in order to maintain the quota at the Fairbridge Farm School. As hon. members are aware, a considerable amount of money is found by societies in England, the Overseas Child Migration Society furnishing a large proportion. The cost to this State at the present is about 3s. 6d. per child.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: For about a hundred children?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I think the State is paying for about 200 now.

Hon. M. F. Troy: What do the Imperial Government pay?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Imperial Government are not paying anything. Two English societies are paying, and are continuing their contributions. From the same gazette to which I referred a little while ago I learn that during November of last year a sum of £2,500 was received from the Coalfields Distress Fund in England to be paid at the rate of £50 per child destined for the Fairbridge Farm School, provided the father, if alive, has been normally employed in the mining industry but is in necessitous circumstances, or, if dead, was

during his life so employed and left his family in necessitous circumstances. The committee administering the scheme have a high opinion of the work done by the Fairbridge Farm School, and are anxious that the work should be continued. It will appear that the English coalfields have done something, out of their distress fund, to assist English children in Western Australia. The children now coming out are all under ten years of age, and will not be released for employment for another four years. A certain number of these children are released every year, but all those now migrating to Western Australia are under the age limit of ten years, so that they will remain on the farm for another four years before being released for work in the State. We have asked the Home authorities to discontinue sending any other children as soon as they have sent out children in respect of whom they have agreements. I have not the exact figures as to the amount paid, but a considerable amount of money comes out from Home for the upkeep of the Fairbridge Farm School. During the year, in order to give some little relief to settlers unable to pay their land rents, there has been a remission of fines. In some quarters the wisdom of this course is doubted, but to me at any rate it seems harsh to fine a man who cannot pay. To those who have any doubt on the subject I wish to say that the man who can pay and will not pay has his property forfeited by the State. That should be sufficient.

Hon. M. F. Troy: Why should a man be fined if he cannot pay?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I quite agree that such a proceeding is wrong. Where a man able to pay does not pay, his land is forfeited. The member for Guildford-Midland has at various times stated that the Government have not given consideration to the report of the Royal Commission on Farmers' Disabilities. I say definitely that every consideration has been given to the report.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I said the Government had not given effect to the report.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I wish every member of the House had read the report as frequently as members of the Government have read it. I can assure the Committee that a great deal of consideration has been given to the report, and that a great deal was done by the Government ahead of the report being printed. Firstly,



the report deals with 2,000 farmers who are not quite in the position of being unable to continue in their industry but who say it is impossible for them to carry on unless assistance is rendered to them. In order to help those 2,000 farmers it was suggested that a flour tax be imposed to raise £240,000. That amount was to be paid into a trust account, and from that account were to be drawn funds to assist farmers unable to obtain assistance from outside.

Hon. M. F. Troy: A flour tax in Western Australia to raise £240,000?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Hon. members will recognise that a tremendous tax would have to be imposed on the local consumption of about 2,000,000 bushels in order to produce £240,000 from local consumption of flour. The tax would have been so severe as probably to raise the price of bread by 2d. per loaf. I think hon. members are aware that such a tax on flour would be ultra vires the Constitution Act—or so we have been informed. However, even if the tax were not ultra vires, the taxation of bread seems to me one of the poorest methods of taxation conceivable. I do not know that members of this Chamber would allow the Government to impose such a tax, even if the Government desired to do so, and the worst feature of it is that every farmer above those 2,000 would have to come down to the level of the 2,000 before he could get any assistance, and in a little while the whole of the farming community would have been down there. That was obviated by the Federal Government giving a bonus of 4½d. per bushel, from which we received about £790,000. While the Commissioners say that certain things might be done, I should like to draw attention to page 10 where they say, as follows:—

The plan is limited to taking off the 1931-32 harvest, and the putting in and taking off the 1932-33 crops. It seems little use at the present time attempting to solve the many problems which are confronting the State in the wool and wheat industries. Rather an attempt should be made to carry on if possible for two seasons and then take a survey of the position.

We have done that with the aid of the Associated Banks and the commercial houses; we have enabled them to carry on for two years, and I am not sure the outlook is very much brighter.

Hon. M. F. Troy: You say you did it! The banks and the merchants did it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We are all in it, the farmers themselves and the banking institutions and the commercial houses and others who have given credit to the farmers. At the moment the outlook is not much brighter than it was two years ago, except that a new order of conditions has forced itself on to us and we seem to have settled down to that new order. Eighteen months or two years ago the position in this State seemed almost impossible, but to-day we find the people have been prepared to face the situation, and in consequence are overcoming their difficulties. Then in respect of those farms of which we will have to dispossess the settlers, the Commissioners say—

Until times improve and properties are saleable it might be advisable for the bank to keep the present occupants in possession of the properties, giving them sufficient sustenance.

And they point out that it is for determination by Parliament and the Agricultural Bank. In many instances we have done that. There have been instances in which the farmers refused to stay on the land under those conditions, feeling that they would be better off in the ranks of the unemployed. That is why we have so many farms on our hands at present: people have left their holdings, not only properties mortgaged to the Government, but also those mortgaged to private banks. I feel sure those people would have been far better off had they stayed on the properties that were once theirs.

Hon. M. F. Troy: They got no backing.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But in many cases they got certain assistance. In some cases it was impossible to give them the backing. Year after year there have been farmers carried on only by the new money put in to assist them. During the two years we reached the stage where what money we had ought to have been, and was, made available only to those who returned something for that money. So in consequence some of the farmers had to suffer the result of the shortage of money, and the fact that it was not a business proposition. The Commissioners point to the charges made by the Harbour Trust. They state—

It might be pertinently said that the Fremantle Harbour Trust is a taxing machine chiefly on the primary producer, and it might be conceded that the burden falls mainly on primary producers and most certainly does, as in years of heavy production of wheat and

wool the exports so considerably exceed the imports.

There is one point here which evidently the Commissioners overlooked. They say—

It is significant that the following amounts have been transferred from the Harbour Trust accounts to Consolidated Revenue:—

	£
1926-27 .. .. .	159,857
1927-28 .. .. .	143,197
1928-29 .. .. .	173,984
1929-30 .. .. .	200,529
1930-31 .. .. .	121,225

In 1930-31 we had a record wheat yield of 53,000,000 bushels, and we saw the biggest export of wheat that ever Western Australia had. Yet there was a falling off in revenue of £80,000. It shows clearly that the exporter of primary produce does not pay the amount he is credited with by the Royal Commissioners.

Member: There is no wharfage at all on wheat.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If the Fremantle Harbour Trust is a taxing machine at all, it is a taxing machine on imports rather than on exports. I think the idea behind it is that the man who has to sell his produce in the markets of the world should get his product away from the State as cheaply as possible, while those who bring manufactured goods into the State should, when they dump their stuff here, pay a little more than those who are manufacturing the goods within the State.

Hon. M. F. Troy: They get a rebate.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Sometimes. Of course they have to land their stuff here at a price at which they can compete with the local manufacturers. I propose to give figures relating to the proportion paid to the Fremantle Harbour revenue by the various exporting interests, as follow:—Wheat, nothing; flour, bran, pollard, nothing; wool, skins and hides 6.8 per cent. of the revenue; timber, 9 per cent.; all others, 2.4 per cent. There are the proportions of the total revenue. Those are just the primary products. The Fremantle Harbour revenue is made up by the boats calling there. Two mail boats call every week; then there are the foreign boats and the Eastern States boats that come here. They represent the sources of a considerable amount of the revenue. Perhaps members would like to know something about

the service to cargo owners, and the costs. For instance, pilotage and various other things amount to £30,754; service to cargo owners, namely handling, storage, etc., £107,000; plant hire and crane hire, £7,037; grain handling plant, £17,746 or, the two together, £24,783. That was for 1931-32. So it will be seen that for the hire of plant and equipment the amount is comparatively small. It is evident that those who charge the Government with extorting revenue from the primary producer have not made any analysis to see how the amounts are arrived at.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Is that a recent return you are quoting from?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, these are figures I have had taken out.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The Bulk Handling Select Committee received a return to-day, but it is based very differently from that one.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I think my figures are correct. The Royal Commissioners set out how the charges compare with those in the Eastern States. But it must be realised that Sydney, with its tremendous amount of shipping, is able to handle cargo and provide accommodation at a price much lower than we can offer here. The Commissioners set out the charges at Melbourne and Adelaide and the various other ports. Of course, if the amount of cargo handled here and the number of boats coming here were as great as those bigger ports enjoy, then with our capital expenditure we could reduce our charges. But the charges at Fremantle harbour are not laid against the primary producer, not nearly so much as against the general community. I hope members will look into that, and that in consequence we shall not have this rumour continually going through the country that the Fremantle harbour is made a taxing machine against the farmer.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You take their surplus profits into Consolidated Revenue.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Our harbours cost a great deal to maintain, and they ought to be maintained out of revenue.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: But the Fremantle Harbour Trust deduct interest and sinking fund and working expenses before handing you the surplus.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If it is paid into revenue and the maintenance is paid for out of revenue, there can be nothing wrong with it. We cannot continually go on borrowing money to maintain anything, for it must be maintained out of revenue.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The Fremantle harbour is a taxing machine, for it pays over £100,000 surplus revenue into Consolidated Revenue.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Can the hon. member tell the House whether we have paid any maintenance out of revenue? If so, the money has to be brought into revenue before it can be paid out of revenue.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: But the Harbour Trust provides for that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It may be that some of the charges at Fremantle are high, those made by the people who handle the goods down there. I have not investigated that yet, but if members so desire I will go into it. On page 7 of the report the Commission set out their recommendations. They deal with the tariff. Members know we have nothing to do with that, and all we can do is to raise a protest just as people outside have done. The Commission state that wheat handling at sidings and at terminals should be under the control of the Wheat Pool trustees. We have introduced a Bill which I hope will enable us to carry that out. Regarding the Fremantle Harbour Trust charges, the Commission recommend that in the interests of the primary producer a strict investigation should be made with a view to reducing those charges. I say that the primary producer is the man who pays least of all. As to railway freights on wheat and wool, the House knows we have reduced the rates on wool considerably, and as a result we have increased the quantity that is carried over the railways.

Hon. M. F. Troy: You have increased the rates on wire netting.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: By a very small amount.

Hon. M. F. Troy: By 15 per cent. I know, because I have paid it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We get very little additional revenue out of it. There have been two slight increases, and only two.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Any way, why is a slight increase like that imposed?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Regarding railway freights on wheat, I do not know whether I have the figures here, but I do know that the freights in this State are the lowest in Australia. I cannot say whether that is anything to recommend them. Hon. members should know that we have a greater railway mileage per head of the population than any country in the world. Over a distance of 152 miles the freights on wheat in the various States are as follows: Western Australia 12s. 8d.; Victoria 13s. 9d.; New South Wales 14s. 4d.; and South Australia 15s. 1d. So that the claim that we are charging the wheat-grower a great deal more by way of freight is certainly not correct, taking into consideration the additional cost. The reduction of costs on the railways in respect of wool is 5 per cent. below the figure of 1914, on wool packs it is 8 per cent. lower, and on fertiliser no less than 50 per cent. below the 1914 figures. There has been a slight increase in wheat due to the fact that the railways have inaugurated a new basis of carrying. At the present time it is carried on a 10 or 20 miles basis. The Commission also referred to water rates and charges and said that those charges ought to be reduced. Water rates were reduced from 10d. to 6d. per acre before the Commission presented their report, and we also cut out the pernicious method of taxation on those who were carting water from standpipes. With regard to road and vermin rates, the House had already agreed to legislation enabling road boards to make reductions in their taxation by 50 per cent. After all, these are matters entirely for those closely associated with the industry, and if they do not know what is a fair thing for the industry, I do not know how this House can take the responsibility. The Commission also dealt with land taxation. That has been abolished. The Commission referred to the abolition of stamp duty. I do not know why. Any farmer to-day who has come under the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act is exempt from stamp duty, and there are very few mortgages being effected. If hon. members peruse the figures derived from stamp duties they will notice how considerably those duties have been reduced.

Hon. M. F. Troy: Increased.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Perhaps the hon. member is referring to the stamp on cheques.

Hon. M. F. Troy: Insurance.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There has been no increase in insurance.

Hon. M. F. Troy: Yes.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There has not been any increase. I have heard it said here that we have increased stamp duty on cheques by 100 per cent. We have increased the duty from 1d. to 2d. The Commission also suggest that we should amend the Agricultural Bank Act to allow the trustees to forego interest. I think hon. members will know how we have suspended interest payments. We have been forced to do so because settlers have been unable to pay their interest; therefore there was no need for the Commission to have given that matter so much thought. Actually it had been done. With regard to wheat areas outside the 20-miles radius from existing railways, the Commission recommended that all expenditure by the Agricultural Bank in those areas should be discontinued, as it is not profitable to produce wheat thereon. After all, many people, even members of this House, have farmed a greater distance than 20 miles from a railway. We have allowed those people to go there and they have spent their own money in the development of their blocks. Any equity in those properties is theirs, and if we took them off those properties and put them elsewhere they would be taking up the liabilities of others. I contend that where settlements are 20 miles from a railway it is our responsibility to see that railway facilities are provided as soon as possible. The Commission also referred to the Goomarin soldier settlers. The Government have dealt with those soldier settlers on a very fair basis. The Commission suggested that there should be a writing-down of capital and the removal of efficient but dissatisfied settlers to suitable blocks in other areas. The blocks have already been written down as a result of legislation passed by this House. With regard to alkali in the soil in the Lakes Carmody-King-Camm areas, I am assured that it is now not so bad as was anticipated. It is true that the sheep farmers are having a very hard time, but it is difficult to give

them necessary relief. The Commission also say that there is nothing to be gained by harassing settlers. I can state that that is not being done, and has not been done. The Commission deal with the transport of livestock, and suggest that an Act of Parliament be passed to meet the difficulty. Generally speaking, I suggest to the House that we have already given effect to a great deal of the Commission's report. We have even anticipated some of their recommendations. They tell us that there should be an amendment of the Federal Bankruptcy Act. We have not yet had anyone who has dared to test our State legislation; if anyone did so, he would have to pay. We are also asked to make the trustees of the Wheat Pool a body corporate. It is proposed to do that, and already there is a Bill before the House. The Commission also ask us to make alterations to the Agricultural Bank management. I do not know to what extent we should carry out those alterations, but it is intended to put a man in charge of the South-West. He will be a travelling inspector. There will also be one in the wheat areas. It is impossible for the trustees to do their work and travel through the various parts of the State. The member for Mount Magnet knows that it was not possible to carry on group settlement indefinitely under the method that was in force. Group settlement had to be handed over to some responsible authority, and it was transferred from the control of the Lands Department to that of the Agricultural Bank. The amount on the Estimates this year is about £59,000. I have no doubt that hon. members will require some information about various subjects, but I assure them that we have cut down our Estimates to as low a figure as was possible. There is a decrease as compared with last year. I can only hope that the day is not far distant when we shall again have an active Lands Department. Last year the vote was £61,457, and we spent £57,296. There is a reduction this year of £3,880, making the estimate £53,416. During the year the Immigration Officer was practically closed. The office that was in Murray-street was removed to the Lands Department, and there is now one officer in charge of the files, doing that work with other duties in the Lands Department. I

hope hon. members will approve of the Estimates. I will do my utmost to enlighten them if they seek information.

**HON. M. F. TROY** (Mt. Magnet) [5.59]: The Minister made an excellent speech and I compliment him on having given the House so much information. Apparently he took some time to prepare his reply to the Royal Commission on farmers' disabilities. That reply was opportune, because hon. members on both sides have been stressing the fact that the recommendations of the Commission had not been adopted. I have not been able to go into the Minister's figures but I hope to have the opportunity to do so before the Loan Estimates are presented. Supporters of the Government have complained bitterly in country centres that no opportunity has been given them to discuss the Commission's report. I would point out that if the Government do not take action to enable members to discuss it, members themselves can provide the opportunity by moving a motion.

The Minister for Lands: That has been done before now.

**Hon. M. F. TROY**: The member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith) complained that the Premier had given the House no opportunity to discuss the Royal Commission's report on group settlement matters. There is no difficulty; all the hon. member has to do is to move a motion. It is not necessary to blame the Government, for the responsibility rests equally on members themselves to have such matters discussed. The Minister for Lands admitted that his department had been inactive during the past 12 months. We know it must have been so because little settlement is going on. We cannot complain of that in the circumstances, and the Minister has pointed out that he is more concerned about keeping on the land the people who are already there. I would not be a party to putting men on the land, particularly in the outer areas, where we cannot provide the necessary facilities. Such a policy would be a menace and the Minister said that when he took office he put a stop to the practice of placing men on land in remote areas. I want to inform the Minister that that policy was stopped before he took office. The Labour Government put a stop to it and refused to allow blocks in the outer areas to be selected. I refused to

allow land to be surveyed in the Yilgarn electorate beyond Bullfinch and the State farm at Ghooli. In the early days settlers were in the habit of securing land under promise to the Government that they would not seek financial assistance. As soon as they became settled, however, they made it a political matter that they should secure assistance. Those settlers abandoned their promises and urged upon various Governments that they were entitled to support. Their promises were not worth more than a scrap of paper. To put a stop to that attitude on the part of settlers, the Labour Government established the State farm at Ghooli, and I instructed the Managing Trustee of the Agricultural Bank (Mr. McLarty) that the Government would not allow further assistance to settlers desirous of taking up land in the outer areas. We did not permit more land to be surveyed there, so that there would be no excuse for settlers going out and subsequently urging financial assistance. We did that because we could not provide the necessary facilities for those farmers. I find no fault with the discontinuance of the policy of settling those outer areas, but that discontinuance had been authorised long before the Minister took charge of the department. In view of the parlous condition of the State, I have been surprised to learn that the department received such a large amount in revenue. During last year the departmental revenue amounted to £315,000, which was only £40,000 less than that received during the previous 12 months. Conditions cannot be so very bad in view of that result, and I must confess I was agreeably surprised to learn that so many settlers in the agricultural and pastoral areas—I presume that revenue from town blocks and other locations is included in the total—had been able to meet their commitments. I hope that condition of affairs will continue and that the department will have the same experience this year, because revenue is necessary. I observe also that the departmental expenditure has declined. That must naturally be so because the department is not as active as it was in former years. I was interested in the report issued by the Under Secretary for Lands, extracts from which were published in the "West Australian." The report furnished much information to hon. members.

The Minister for Lands: The report has been laid on the Table of the House.

Hon. M. F. TROY: That may be, but I was in the country when I noticed the publication in the "West Australian." Apparently, new settlement has consisted almost exclusively of the placing of the unemployed on the land. Provided that the State can maintain those people, and can secure some return, I do not know of any better way of absorbing the unemployed, particularly in view of the fact that to-day people are prepared to make sacrifices that they would not have been willing to do some time back. Conditions throughout Western Australia and indeed throughout the world in general, have made all of us a little more reasonable than we were in more prosperous times. We have begun to face the facts, and it is possible that under those conditions, provided we get the proper type of man and that the man applies himself to his task, land settlement can be carried on much more economically than at any other time during the past 20 years. There has not been that aspiration on the part of many people to go on the land to make homes for themselves and to make sacrifices to that end, such as was common in the early days of the colonisation of Australia. In those days, settlers came out from countries where they had never known homes of their own, and after labouring under most oppressive conditions, but always imbued with the hope and desire to make for themselves in this new country a home that they could call their own, ultimately won their way to success. I remember that when I was a boy a song was popular in the country where I was born and bred. It began, "Show me a land where settlers can find free and happy homes." It was the desire of the settlers in those days to secure for themselves free and happy homes. It was something they had wished for all their lives, and eventually they attained their goal because they were prepared to make the necessary sacrifices. When I was Minister for Lands, I encountered many settlers who had been through the same experience and had the same aspirations. I have no objection to the placing of men on the land to-day because it is probably the most economical time for it to be done. On the other hand, I have an objection to the policy of placing men on sustenance on improved properties, because nothing could be worse for the settlers or for the community generally. I am aware that,

for some years past, the Government have been maintaining settlers on the land, and, so far as I know, 100 per cent of the improvements to be carried out on the holdings they have taken up, have already been made. If all the improvements have been carried out, why are settlers placed on the blocks and paid £2 a week as sustenance? Is it because the land will not maintain the men?

The Minister for Lands: The trouble is that a lot of the undergrowth has sprung up, and has had to be cleared off.

Hon. M. F. TROY: But this has been going on for a year or two, and the undergrowth would not have come up so quickly.

The Minister for Lands: It grows in much less than that time.

Hon. M. F. TROY: At any rate, the conditions that obtain do not require men on sustenance to be placed on the blocks for two or three years. We have discussed this matter before in the House, and surely the clearing of the second growth has not occupied all that time. I cannot conceive of any satisfactory method of settlement that depends for success upon the payment of sustenance to settlers at the rate of £2 a week. I am intrigued with that type of settlement. It would suit a lot of people. I would not object to it myself. Fancy receiving £2 a week when placed on a fully improved farm, where no further improvements can be effected! If that is regarded as success, then there is no man in Western Australia who could not be successful if furnished with such a proposition.

The Minister for Lands: For every cow the settlers keep, there is a deduction of 5s.

Hon. M. F. TROY: Yet this sort of thing continues merrily! On some of these properties the State has spent £2,000 or £3,000. On some, more than that has been spent, and I entirely disagree with that method of settlement. It may keep the land in occupation and the improvements maintained, but could any Minister of the Crown justify a land settlement policy that provides sustenance at the rate of £2 for men placed on blocks already fully improved?

The Minister for Lands: We would probably have to pay those people more if they stayed in Perth.

Hon. M. F. TROY: Then is that the reason? If it is cheaper to place the men on the land than to allow them to remain about Perth, and if it can be regarded as a successful method of land settlement, then the unemployment trouble is solved. This sort of thing may be all right for a particular locality, but it is not good for the settler or for the State. I have received sheaves of complaints from settlers but I do not reply to them. When I was Minister for Lands I did my best for them, but now they are complaining bitterly because many of them have been put off their blocks and new settlers have taken over their holdings with the advantage of the payment of £2 a week.

• The Minister for Lands: That statement is not correct.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I know it is right. Unfortunately we cannot discuss Agricultural Bank matters under the Lands Vote. The bank is not administered by the Minister but that institution is pressing the farmers and is pushing off the original settlers with the object of replacing them with new men who have the advantage of the sustenance payments of £2 a week. Throughout the country areas, bitterness is expressed regarding the unfairness of the Government in refusing the original settlers further assistance because they could not make good on their blocks, and securing to the new settlers the weekly financial assistance I have mentioned. In the circumstances, the Committee can easily understand the reason for the feeling engendered in the rural areas. The people are bitter about it. Although I have received many complaints, it is a matter for the Government to deal with. The Premier promised the settlers the heavens and the earth. He promised to reduce interest charges and capitalisation. He made hundreds of promises I could not possibly make if I were to regard myself as decent, straightforward and honest. The Premier made them and has not kept them. There is great bitterness and dissatisfaction in consequence.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Hon. M. F. TROY: I was speaking of the men on sustenance in the settlement areas. It is the policy of the Government to pay those men £2 per week. This

policy is causing a lot of discontent because some settlers receive what is termed favouritism, and injustice is done to others. This is not the time to discuss group settlement, as it does not come under the administration of the Minister for Lands. When the Loan Estimates come before us, I hope to have something to say on group settlement. It is surprising to me that the group settlement administration and the Agricultural Bank should have been divorced from the Lands Department. The Agricultural Bank and the group settlement areas, which naturally come within the administration of the Lands Department, are now administered by the Treasury, and the Minister for Lands has no control whatever over those two important activities. That should not be so. Why it is the case, I do not know.

The Minister for Lands: The group settlements have been transferred to the Agricultural Bank.

Hon. M. F. TROY: But the Agricultural Bank was always under the administration of the Lands Department. Although members on the Government side blame the trustees of the bank for the administration of group settlement, the trustees have no option but to obey the instructions received from the Treasury. The Premier is entirely responsible for the dissatisfaction and the chaos that exist. I do not hold the Minister for Lands responsible, because he does not administer group settlement. I was interested to hear the statement of the Minister regarding the settlement at Lakes King, Camm and Carmody. I was Minister when the settlement took place, and I should like to apportion responsibility to both the Imperial Government and the Federal Government. There was nothing wrong with that settlement when it took place. If the same circumstances again prevailed, settlement would proceed once more as it did in those days. We are always ahead of railway construction with our settlement. The State has never been able to build railways as settlement proceeded; it has always been a few years behind settlement. Members know that all over the country settlers have been located at considerable distances from railways for some time, but the policy of Governments has been to build railways as soon as the money was available and the settlers were producing. Had the depression not occurred, no doubt those settlers would have been enjoying railway communication to-day. We have to remember that the settlers at Karl-

garin had to do without railway communication for years, but they got it ultimately. The settlers at Lakes King, Camm and Carmody would have had railway communication, but the depression occurred and no money could be borrowed for the construction of railways. We had to come to a standstill in the matter of railway construction. I do not know of any Minister who has made a promise that settlers would be given railway communication because they settled on the land. Certainly such a promise was never made by me. Still, it was always understood that when men went out and settled the country, they would eventually get railway facilities. That was a promise of the country. The settlers went to the Lakes King, Camm and Carmody country during the time the 3,500 farms scheme was under consideration. That scheme embraced not only the country to the east of existing settlement south from Southern Cross, but also the land along the Kulja eastward railway. Along that line are 400 settlers who were primarily in the 3,500 farms scheme, but when the larger scheme was under consideration it was submitted to the Government by the Migration and Development Commission, of which Mr. Gepp was chairman, that the Government might leave the Lakes King, Camm and Carmody country to be included in the greater scheme to embrace all the territory south of Southern Cross and east of existing settlement to Salmon Gums. The Government built the line from Kulja eastward, and that is how the settlers east of Mollerin got their railway. In my opinion, the Migration and Development Commission have an obligation so far as the settlers of Lakes King, Camm and Carmody are concerned. They knew all about the settlement, and stood behind it. About 700 blocks were available for settlement east of Kulja and at Lakes King, Camm and Carmody. They were inside the rabbit-proof fence. I told Sir Charles Nathan and Mr. Gunn that people were clamouring for land and that we could not hold it too long, and they said, "You go on with that; it will come in the larger scheme." We went on with it. Then the Mollerin area was excluded, in order to have the whole of the 3,500 farms scheme served by the one railway. I have not the slightest doubt that if the depression had

not occurred, those people would have had railway communication. A further obstacle presented itself when Dr. Teakle condemned the land. Dr. Teakle did not condemn the land at Lakes King, Camm and Carmody. He condemned land south of Southern Cross to Salmon Gums: not all of it, but sufficient to give the Government food for thought. There was never any fear in the minds of members or of the Government that the land was salty, because it does not bear the appearance of being salty. It grows fine timber. As the Minister pointed out, although it has been stated that the land at Lakes King, Camm and Carmody will become salty, that has not been the experience of the settlers so far. They have grown very good crops. Dr. Teakle's report did not condemn all that land; it condemned a percentage of the land, sufficient to prevent any Government from taking the responsibility for pursuing settlement. Consequently the Government paused, and later declared that they would not go on with the settlement of the larger area to Salmon Gums until the whole area had been investigated. In that decision the Government were supported by the Migration and Development Commission. It was a very wise policy. Looking back over the years that have elapsed, I consider that the Government acted wisely. There is nothing to regret. We were criticised and condemned at the time for not proceeding with the scheme, and Dr. Teakle's report was derided as being absolute nonsense. I have no hesitation in saying that had every settlement scheme in Western Australia been entered upon in the same spirit and with the same precautions, there would not have been the calamity experienced over group settlement. Neither would there have been the settlement of large numbers of people on unsuitable country and under unsuitable conditions. The then Government determined not to proceed with the scheme, and immediately upon that intention being announced, the present Premier made a statement to the Press. He was always making statements criticising us. I often reflect how different is the attitude of the present Leader of the Opposition, and how much fairer Mr. Collier is compared with what Sir James Mitchell was. Month after month he lost no oppor-



tunity to criticise and condemn us. In the course of his statement to the Press he said—

The salt bogey is convenient just now, because it enables the Government to put off further consideration of the work of settling this area. The 3,500 farms scheme has been dangled before the public for years, and advertised so much that land-hungry people of the Eastern States came here to select land, only to be disappointed and to return east and decry the land settlement methods of this State. Dr. Teakle, in his report, does not indulge, as does the Premier in his statement, in a more or less wholesale condemnation of certain classes of land. If you strike trouble, you naturally make all possible investigations. But fancy applying soil analyses to our millions of acres of land when we know that the characteristics of land the world over change very rapidly!

In two columns of Press matter Sir James Mitchell derided Dr. Teakle and condemned the Government for having taken notice of Dr. Teakle's report. The present Minister for Works also had something to say, but he was very much less condemnatory in his remarks. He assumed that Dr. Teakle's report constituted a condemnation of the whole of the forest area of Western Australia. Of course that was not so. Sir James Mitchell's condemnation was that the Government did not push on with the whole scheme and ignore Dr. Teakle's report entirely.

The Minister for Works: I knew what was happening at Lake Brown.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I have the Minister's remarks on the subject. We did not go on with it. It would have been suicidal for the Government to have done so. We should have been very blameworthy had we gone on with it. I am glad the Government have not shifted more than a dozen people from the Lakes Carmody, King and Camm districts. Out of the money that has been raised by the Loan Council a sum should be set apart for the construction of a railway into those areas.

The Minister for Lands: Hear, hear!

Hon. M. F. TROY: There are 200 or 300 settlers there. Money is being raised by the Loan Council to-day. Not a great mileage of railway is required, but the people should be given railway communication so that they might make a success of their holdings. If the depression had not occurred the railway would have been built two years ago. I was told that the Minister for Lands said one

early morning that I had wasted a lot of money. That was not true.

The Minister for Lands: When did I say that?

Hon. M. F. TROY: I was told that early one morning, when I was absent from the House, the Minister said I had wasted many thousands of pounds.

The Minister for Lands: I said you continued to spend money on group settlement.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I have a rod in pickle for the Minister in that regard. If he said I wasted money on group settlement, not a man in this country nor a member of this Chamber would believe him if he said it a thousand times.

The Minister for Lands: I did not use the word "wasted"; I said "spent."

Hon. M. F. TROY: I did not waste any money. The people know that the present Premier was entirely responsible for the whole thing. I shall be able to furnish some facts regarding this question when we reach the Loan Estimates. I tried to give the settlers a sense of responsibility, but all the time the present Premier was visiting the settlements and telling the people they were being badly treated and that all they needed was a fair deal. He said the land was all right, the settler was all right, and the climate was all right, but that the administration was all wrong and the settlement was being ruined. Sir James Mitchell does not dare to poke his nose into a group settlement area now, and he never goes near any of them. Last Christmas he certainly went down that way, but he spent his time fishing along the coast. When he heard there was to be a public meeting he bolted from the area and will not go there any more. I shall continue to do my utmost to see that the settlers of the Lakes Carmody, King and Camm areas get their railway. Despite what Sir Charles Nathan may have said, I have some sense of responsibility. I said to the Migration and Development Commission in the Premier's room that people were clamouring for this land. Mr. Gunn replied, "Go on with it; it is part of the scheme." It would have been part of the scheme but that Dr. Teakle's report put an entirely different complexion upon the situation. I do not know whether Dr. Teakle is right or wrong. He knows more about the matter than I do. If in the be-

ginning of our wheat development, Dr. Teakle had gone abroad in Western Australia we might not have settled a single farm. He might have condemned every block. There is hardly a farm in the State which after a time does not show evidence of salt. I visited the Forrest homestead at Northern Gully about 20 years ago. There was a freshwater brook passing through the orchard, and I thought the place resembled a veritable Eden. A few years ago I found that the brook had gone salt, and that the whole of the area in front of the house had done the same. The country had been cleared and attempts had been made to conserve the moisture. The water level had risen and the salt had broken out. Several hundreds of acres of land there will not now grow crops, because the water has risen and the salt has been left behind. That sort of thing is going on in many parts of the State. Dr. Teakle, however, knows his subject. Any Government which ignored his advice, in view of what has happened at Salmon Gums, would be taking a grave responsibility. The Minister did not say whether the Government proposed to assist the settlers in this area by giving them a carting bonus. They will have to find the money for this until railway communication is established. This would be of help to those people until they are given the same facilities as are enjoyed by other settlers. The reduction in land rentals due to an amendment of the Land Act, and based on the price of wool, has meant a saving of £18,000 to the pastoralists.

The Minister for Lands: For the half year, from January to June.

Hon. M. F. TROY: The report indicates that it is for the whole year. It is not a very remarkable reduction, although I suppose it is of some advantage to the people concerned. I cannot see any possibility of such a saving being of material assistance to men who are down and out. If they had the land for nothing they could not carry on under present conditions. I am not condemning this temporary help, but we should at the time have based the reduction not on the value of wool, but on a 33 1/3rd per cent. cut such as has applied everywhere else in this State.

The Minister for Lands: The maximum cut has been 22½ per cent. We reduced

some of the Kimberley pastoral rents 40 per cent.

Hon. M. F. TROY: It is 33 1/3rd per cent in all. The department has a large number of abandoned farms which are going back to nature. Many of those farms are on the wheat belt. What do the Government intend to do with them? The Agricultural Bank trustees have advanced money for the development of those areas, and are not willing to sell unless they get back the whole of the money involved. That is an unsound policy. The money was not advanced on a sound developmental basis in the first place. It has happened that a settler has not been doing well and has borrowed all the money he could under the Agricultural Bank Act, or as much as the trustees considered advisable to lend. Owing to pressure brought to bear upon the trustees, from time to time the settler has had further advances. Later on, he has received more money through the Industries Assistance Board. The interest was never paid and the rents fell into arrears. Such a property now carries a capitalisation that is not warranted in the circumstances. No new settler looking for land will take over the burden when the improvements do not represent the actual outlay. The bank will be compelled to reduce the capitalisations because the capital itself was not built up on a sound developmental plan. It was built up on advances that were made from time to time through political pressure.

The Minister for Lands: The capitalisation is being reduced.

Hon. M. F. TROY: The bank is trying to get back all the money it can. In these times when money is scarce the bank trustees have not a chance of getting it. With the price of wool and wheat standing at a low level, no man in his senses would pay more for a property than it will return under present conditions.

Mr. Griffiths: The bank will cut down the price to a newcomer.

Hon. M. F. TROY: The applicant may get a reduction, but the trustees were not justified in the first case in advancing all the money they did. The money was only given because of political influence that was brought to bear. Members of Parliament complained, reproached and condemned, and the trustees gave way little by little hoping that an advance of £100 might make the settlers' position secure. That £100 led to another £100 until the settler received

£1,000, and his last position was worse than his first. Ultimately the bank will have to write down these properties very considerably before a purchaser can be found. It is important that these properties should not be allowed to revert to nature, and that purchasers should be found for them as soon as possible to take them over. To this end they should be asked to take over only a fair liability so that the properties might be brought up to a reasonable stage of development. If the present state of affairs continues for two more years, considerable writing down will have to be done. How the State will stand I do not know. I cannot conceive of the State paying its way. Let members imagine present prices continuing for another two years. What position will the State be in then? The settlers will be unable to carry their liabilities and there must be a writing down all round. If we can get relief through a writing down of interest overseas, and that is a question which will have to be taken up as soon as possible, we shall have to pass that relief on to the settlers and those people who are the debtors of the State. The Minister alleged that the Government had reduced railway freights on super. He did not represent the facts. Freights were reduced because the superphosphate companies had erected establishments at Geraldton and Bunbury.

The Minister for Lands: I was only replying to the report of the Commission.

Hon. M. F. TROY: On such vital material as wire netting, freights have gone up 15 per cent. The rabbit pest is a growing one and is responsible for very great damage being done. The freight on galvanised iron and most hardware, including piping and windmills, has also risen 15 per cent. All these commodities are required for the development of the land. In my opinion, the rates should not have been raised at a time like this, when settlers are in a desperate position. I am glad to learn from the Minister that every attempt will be made to keep our settlers on the land. If they went off their holdings, we would have to maintain them elsewhere. There is an opinion amongst people that if they leave the land the Government must maintain them. So the settler who has been maintained must recognise that the State is doing him a service, because if he leaves the land and betakes himself elsewhere, there is only one end to it: a time will come

when it will not be possible to maintain anybody. There is an idea that wealth is turned out in a machine-like manner, and that there is no end to it. But of course there is an end to it. So whilst the Government are sticking to the settlers—and they should do so as long as they can, and up to the last shilling in the case of the legitimate settler—the settlers must not expect that they are to be assisted at the expense of everybody else. Everyone must get a fair deal. I would like to impress that fact upon members opposite. They tell the settler that he is the one man in the country. True he is an important element in the country; but every man who renders a service is of benefit to the country, it matters not where he renders the service. The men who tend machinery, who drive a locomotive, who handle butter or wool, who shear the sheep, all are rendering service, and all are of importance to the country. Everybody who renders a service to the State must be considered. The settler must get help as far as possible, and so must everyone else who renders service. I hope the Government will find money to keep the settler on the land, and at the same time give a fair deal to everybody else in Western Australia.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford-Midland) [8.3]: This department, in conjunction with the Agricultural Department, in my opinion offers the only means of relieving the gloomy, melancholy life of those who have been unemployed for a year or two years, or more, and whose outlook for re-employment is so remote that they have given up hope, and have become despondent as to ever getting back to work. I have never taken part in any of the schemes for suburban blocks, or similar means, as being of any value to relieve the distress of the unemployed as we have them to-day in their thousands. To my mind, there are men with large families, able-bodied men, strong in physique, capable in mentality, who, as things are, will never go back to work. It is my belief there is no hope of industry being revived sufficiently to enable men around the age of 50 to obtain industrial employment again. Holding that view, I can quite understand the gloom and despair in thousands of Western Australian homes to-day. But just as I sympathise with that position. I am satisfied that we could overcome the

difficulty if the Lands Department would exert itself and the Agricultural Department would become active. There are, I know, members who say that the only hope there is for the unemployed is to get them on the land. As I have already stated, there is talk of putting the unemployed on suburban blocks. Suburban blocks are not going to give employment, or supply the wants of the unemployed. The idea of trying to get results from Herdsman Lake is, to my mind, nonsense. Such a scheme will get us nowhere. We shall never satisfy men who go on such blocks unless the tilling of the soil in such conditions is associated with employment in industry. I agree that in the case of men working as lumpers at Fremantle and having blocks at Coogee, Spearwood and elsewhere, there is a combination which goes a long way towards making life happy and towards making family conditions genial and satisfactory to children as well as parents. But to-day we have got past that stage. The possibility of further employment for lumpers is decreasing, regularly decreasing; and there is a possibility of its diminishing still further. Industry cannot possibly sustain the wage bill it has sustained in the past. Nevertheless, we have to appreciate that we must provide for those who will be displaced as a result of the needs of primary development and production, and also provide for those who have been out of work for, as I say, two and three years. There are members who say, "If you do not agree with settlement on suburban holdings, you must support the continuation of settlement in remote districts." That I condemn more definitely than I do the suburban proposition. Associated with men in industry, the suburban proposition is quite practicable; but to men out of work it is of no value at all. There is talk of trying to maintain men on land remote from railways, but such talk merely aggravates the position. What is the use of the Minister for Lands holding forth about adding to the bonus on wheat, unsound in itself, which the wheatgrowers are getting to-day from the Federal Government because they produce a commodity at a loss, and taxing the community to provide a bonus of  $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. or more per bushel. In addition, the Minister is going to subsidise the industry by a carting bonus. The position becomes economically impossible, and cannot

continue. Everyone who thinks the question out must appreciate that we are drifting to disaster in that regard. People close to railways, people on the best of land, people on well-developed holdings, to-day cannot produce the main products at a profit. Then what is the use of paying a carting bonus and talking about maintaining people on land scores of miles from the railway system? It is ridiculous to keep them there. It is heartbreaking to ask them to stay there. Women and children must become depressed under such conditions, and it is no credit to Western Australia to maintain a situation of that kind.

The Minister for Lands: Those people were there, at that distance from the railway, when you were in office.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I am not associated with that. I am expressing my view, and I wish to be consistent. I do try to be consistent in my political beliefs. I have political convictions, and as far as I see the light I maintain them. I have never been a party to putting settlers on impossible propositions. I have brought scores of settlers in from remote areas when I knew their farming conditions to be such that the settlers would never make a success.

The Minister for Lands: And you made them take their debts with them.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I may have done that; but I put them all on an economic possibility, and without exception they succeeded. But that is by the way. Whether I did or did not do the right thing when I was Minister or when I was in authority will not have any effect on the existing economic situation. What I am leading up to is this: members say, "You condemn the suburban settlement proposition and the extension of railways for settlement purposes. What do you agree with? If you are honest in your contention that this department plus the Agricultural Department can do the major part towards remedying the position of the unemployed workers, see that they do it." I declare emphatically that what we have to do to-day is to release the unimproved lands adjoining our railway system. It is a perfect outrage—no one can describe it in milder language—that we should permit thousands upon tens of thousands of acres of the very best land in Western Australia to be held up against

settlement by people who cannot use it themselves. To the south of Bunbury there are thousands upon thousands of acres of excellent land; and between Bunbury and Bridgetown the pick of the land of Western Australia is held by people who cannot use it and who deny the right of the unemployed to get relief by using it. We cannot make a man satisfied by putting him on a pettifogging, pocket-handkerchief lot in or adjacent to the metropolitan area. He would be given new life and new hope if a Government would say to the holders of those large areas of unimproved lands, "You have no right under the economic conditions of to-day to monopolise land which could be made the salvation of Western Australia." I have spoken feelingly, and I speak feelingly to-night, because I am tired of commenting upon the unfairness of the position where people monopolise land alongside existing railways, close to butter factories, close to all the needs of civilisation, including schools. And yet settlers are sent away to the 3,500-farms scheme, and to an impossible proposition that is in progress to-day—what is known as the Frankland River settlement. Men are clearing land 20 or 25 miles from an existing railway, land that will never be settled. The Minister talks about its being apple country. Who is going to plant apple trees there? What hope is there of people going out and undertaking the task of putting land under cultivation in those remote parts? Will not the Minister and those in authority profit by the experience of the Denmark settlement, which was cleared on the lines along which the Minister is wasting money to-day? That land was cleared before people were available to settle it, and in consequence the re-growth sprang up and the subsequent clearing cost more than the original. We are perpetuating that to-day. The curse of our group settlement scheme was our blundering. Nobody knows better than the present Minister that the group settlement is a rank failure, a wastage of five or six million pounds, simply because we blundered along as we are blundering along to-day. Land totally unsuitable was selected, and thousands of pounds were spent on land that was abandoned before being cultivated. Areas were cleared which were under water in winter and as hard as

boards in summer. And over all was the fact that the land was so remote from railways that it was impossible to make a success of it. We do not want to go on repeating that kind of thing. The green country was cleared and there was no hope of sweetening it. Even the good forest country could not respond, because it was as sour as could be. The land should have been ringbarked and the country sweetened by fires, the growth cut down in order to feed those fires. But all that was discarded and we went blundering along trying to sweeten rotten country, and trying to settle green country that was totally unsuited to production. The same thing is going on to-day. But the land I speak of, which has been monopolised and which the owners cannot use, that land, generally speaking, has been ringbarked and fires have gone through it, with the result that largely it is sweetened country that would respond to cultivation and give a good living to those associated with its culture and development. Why will not the Government tackle this question? What is the use of going up to Dartmoor? What hope is there of our building a railway to Dartmoor? There will be no railway constructed there if my voice can prevent it.

Mr. Griffiths: What about my Yarramony railway?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I told the hon. member 10 years ago he would never see the Yarramony railway, and I suggested to him a means by which he could help his people. But he turned down my suggestion and is still awaiting the Yarramony railway. Neither the hon. member nor I shall live to see that railway, for it will never be built. Nor do I think we shall ever live to see other lines built, as for instance that to Lake Carmody and such remote places.

The Minister for Lands: What about Nabawah?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Neither the Minister nor I shall see that.

The Minister for Railways: You make me shiver with your pessimism.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: It is time Ministers shivered. It is all right for them to be going to the Loan Council for money on which they have to pay interest for the purpose of helping the unemployed. But a calamity will come upon us unless we tackle

this unemployment problem in a more sympathetic way, which is to tackle the land question and settle all the unimproved land along the railways. There is no other solution of the unemployment difficulty, no hope in clearing land and preparing earthworks in anticipation of railways and so wasting money that has been borrowed from the Loan Council and upon which we are supposed to pay interest. There is no hope of paying that interest on the work we are doing.

The Attorney General: What is the solution you are talking about?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The solution of getting possession again for the State of all unutilised unimproved lands along railways.

The Attorney General: How?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The hon. member should know, for he knows how to put a 4½d. tax on a flat rate on the workers. He has the courage to penalise the workers, but when it comes to the land owner it is another matter.

The Attorney General: Why object to telling us how to get possession of that land?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The Attorney General should know better than I how to tackle the question. If I were Minister for Lands—

The Minister for Lands: You have been here.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I know that, but I am telling the Attorney General that if I were the Minister for Lands to-day I would go to the Attorney General and outline to him my proposals.

The Attorney General: You cannot put it on to me.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I do not expect much from the Attorney General in this regard, for he would sooner placate those in possession of the country than harass them in any way. But unless you do more than you are doing for those who have been unemployed for years, you will be forced to do it in another way. It is quite a simple matter to introduce legislation to compel the utilisation of that land.

The Attorney General: What sort of legislation?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Taxing legislation. You can put a tax of 4½d. on a flat rate on incomes for the purpose of raising money, and so you could put a graduated land tax on unused unimproved land.

The Minister for Railways interjected.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Yes, I would confiscate. With privation and suffering rampant in our midst, I would not hesitate to confiscate that land.

The Attorney General: All land alongside railways?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: There would be no need to go that far, but the Minister for Railways asked me where I stood in the matter.

The Minister for Railways: No, I did not.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: At all events, the way you looked at me implied that you wanted to see if I had the courage to say exactly what I wanted to do.

The Minister for Railways: You stand for a tax on the unimproved value of land.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I would tax that land into use.

The Minister for Railways: No, you wouldn't.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I know what I would do.

The Attorney General: Tell us what you would do.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I would place on that land taxation that would compel the present owners to make it available under conditions favourable to the people, or else to abandon the land and so enable the Government to make it available to the people.

The Minister for Lands interjected.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I know differently. I have travelled between Bunbury and Bridgetown more than once.

The Minister for Lands: When was the last occasion?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Within six months.

The Minister for Lands: What about taking a month off now.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I would go if the Minister accompanied me. The Minister says he is quite enthusiastic about the area at Dartmoor. But that is too remote from an existing railway.

The Minister for Lands: It is within 100 miles of a port.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: It is not the kind of country that requires settlement to-day. We have more than sufficient of that class of country already settled. The kind of country requiring settlement to-day is that between Bunbury and Pemberton

There is sufficient there to relieve the most distressful cases amongst our unemployed.

The Attorney General: Your idea is to tax the unimproved value to the extent of about 2s. in the pound.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I would accept anything the Attorney General proposed. My case is that the people who have monopolised this good land for years have not utilised the land, notwithstanding which we have built expensive roads and railways all through that land. That land has not been utilised for the purpose for which it was made available and selected. We cannot allow that position to continue. The Minister is wrong in attempting to clear additional areas at Nornalup. It will never be any good, and there is no chance of the settlers making an economic success of it.

The Minister for Railways: I heard that about Bruce Rock once.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: You may have, but it was from someone who had not studied the question. Bruce Rock was in an excellent rainfall area and consisted of country eminently suited for the production of sheep and wheat. I was associated with it and I did not hesitate to go into it with the utmost enthusiasm. I was active in getting railway communication right through that good belt of country and to-day it is one of the best areas in what is known as our wheat belt.

The Attorney General: You still have not told us what you would do.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I would sack the Attorney General for his failure to deal with a problem that wants capable handling. The Attorney General is charged with the responsibility of finding ways and means of putting the Government policy into operation. I am appealing to the Minister to declare the Government policy, a policy of making areas available under reasonable conditions by which there would be some prospect of happiness and prosperity for the settlers. The Government should declare a policy of making available land adjacent to railways, and if the Attorney General cannot find ways and means of doing that, he should allow others to do so. What I am urging has been done before. New Zealand did it. The Ballance Government decided that they were not going to allow land monopoly to continue any longer, and they

compelled the monopolists to make their land available.

The Minister for Railways: Of course there is no unemployment in New Zealand to-day!

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I am speaking of the land monopoly that existed in New Zealand when the Ballance and Seddon Governments were in power. Both those Governments had an Attorney General who was capable of framing legislation that had the effect of making land available to the people. A large area was made available as the result of a betterment tax that was imposed. I have spoken quite calmly on this matter for two or three years, but I seem to have done no good at all. I was determined to-night to raise the question again, and in a loud voice to try to make some impression. I believe now the Attorney General appreciates what was done by other men in other countries possessing the opportunities that he has now. Holding the portfolios that he fills in this State, they devised ways and means of unlocking monopolised land. I appeal to him to become active and do likewise with land along the South-Western railway line in this State. The land is there. I want to make it abundantly clear that before we get out of our difficulties we may be compelled to organise our relief on a different basis. We shall have to place the unemployed on land of the kind that I have described, where they will be able to help one another and make life happier than it is to-day. I do not wish to say anything further regarding the unimproved land problem along our existing railways. I have made an appeal to the Minister to try to do something. Last year he promised to conduct an investigation. I do not know how far that investigation went, but the fact remains that the land is still unused and the area to which I have referred to is still monopolised.

The Minister for Lands: It is nearly all State forest.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I know it is not.

The Minister for Lands: But I say it is.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Then if it is, a fire has destroyed it to a great extent. There are many thousands of acres of land there, and it is no use trying to cover up the position. Of course, there are areas of forest country it is wise to conserve, but the

land to which I refer is available there. Everybody that has gone through that country knows it is there, and anyone who is interested in the welfare of the State will condemn any policy at the present time that will permit the existing conditions to continue. With regard to those areas in what is known as the 3,500 farms country, I declare most emphatically that the settlers there are on a most impossible economic proposition. There is no hope of success; there is no chance of a railway being built there and I do ask the Minister to inaugurate a policy whereby it will be possible to bring those people closer to railway communication and within a reasonable distance of markets. If the Minister were to start organising in that direction to-day, he could do a great deal. I appeal to him not to permit people to continue to live between 40 and 50 miles from a railway. It is a hopeless proposition to-day to attempt to farm successfully so far from railway communication. Farming costs have been cut to the bone, and thousands of farmers are getting merely food in return for their labour. The amount being paid in wages to-day in connection with the production of wheat is very small indeed, and I ask the Minister to see whether he cannot relieve existing distress by doing something more than has been done regarding interest rates. Why is it we are so fearful of going into this question of interest payments? This is the position as I see it, and I should like the Attorney General to try to take a serious view of it. We have raised money for the purpose of improving our farms. The value of those farms to-day has depreciated from 33 to 50 per cent. But we are still paying the full interest rates on the original value. The banks to-day say that they sympathise with us. They appreciate the fact that the money that was advanced to us to expend was expended on development, and they say, "Although your asset has depreciated, although the value of the improvements has fallen from 33 to 50 per cent., you must continue to pay your full interest rates." There is no equality of sacrifice there. I do not mind doing my share, and other farmers do not mind doing theirs, but we cannot do the lot. In the name of all that is reasonable, fair and honest, why should the banks say to me, "Now, Johnson, I have advanced you a cer-

tain amount of money; we encouraged you to do improvements, and you have carried those out with the money we lent you. You have supplemented the amount we lent, but what you have done has proved to be a failure; but, Johnson, you have to carry the whole of the failure, and you have to re-pay to us every penny we have advanced." Surely there are means whereby we can overcome a difficulty of that kind. What I have suggested over and over again on behalf of the farmers of the State is that we should realise that during the last three years there have been colossal increases in debts: the commodities we produce have become reduced in value to such an extent that our indebtedness either to the banks or to others outside has increased enormously. I suggest it is a reasonable proposition for the Government to say, "We will find by investigation the amount that the farmer has lost during the last three years." I do not say that that amount should be written-off; I do not suggest that. But I do suggest it is a reasonable thing to say that that amount should be funded and that the farmer should be relieved from paying interest on it, but that he should be required to pay a certain amount off the sum in proportion to his capacity to do so, a capacity that can be calculated quite simply each year until that which he has lost in the three years shall be repaid to those who have suffered the loss. If I fail to pay not because of incapacity on my part, but because of the collapse of the world economic position, and because prices have fallen below the cost of production, I should not be called upon to carry the whole burden. Surely there is a method of distributing it. You impose taxation on me all the time, but you are not imposing anything on the other fellow. Again I appeal to the Government to realise that we cannot drift in the way we are doing. We cannot stand compound interest; we cannot pay simple interest on the accumulated increased indebtedness of the last three years. Surely it is a reasonable proposition. On behalf of the producers, I ask the Government to establish an organisation, charged with the responsibility to investigate each settler's claim, ascertain to what extent he has retrogressed during the three-year period, determine how he has suffered as a result of the fall in commodity prices and then decide how much shall be set



aside in a special fund, free of interest, and allow the repayment of that amount to be extended over a number of years. Again I make an appeal to the Government. I have done so before. Last year I appealed to them to tackle the question, but I have got nowhere with it. The Minister for Lands said I complained about him not doing something regarding the report and recommendations of the Disabilities Commission. I believe the Government failed to deal with the recommendations of that Commission as speedily and as promptly as the condition of the industry required.

Mr. Patrick: You said that the only recommendation of any value was that relating to a monopoly in regard to wheat handling.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I said that that recommendation represented something of definite value in that it would reduce costs considerably. What I said in that regard with reference to the bag system, applies with greater force to the conditions that will obtain under bulk handling. I have not been enthusiastic regarding any of these suggestions because they represent merely palliatives. They are advanced with the object of staving off the day when the collapse will take place. That collapse will assuredly follow if the present condition of affairs does not brighten speedily. If we fund the amount I have already referred to, the farmers will have a chance, but they must be relieved of the payment of interest on that amount. If that were done, the farmer would go on paying that which he should reasonably be called upon to pay. I refer to what may be described as his original debt, but he should not be called upon to pay on his emergency indebtedness, which arose as a result of the depression and the fall in commodity prices. He should not be called upon to shoulder the whole of that responsibility because of the money advanced to him for the purpose of encouraging him to continue his farming activities. Those who advanced the money for that purpose should take some responsibility too.

The Minister for Lands: Then you think the farmer to-day can pay interest on something?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I say definitely that the farmers are prepared to pay interest on their original indebtedness.

The Minister for Lands: It is not a question of being prepared to pay. The point is: Can they pay?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I believe they can pay to the extent I have indicated. I know that I am in as bad a way as most farmers, and I can afford to pay interest on my debt as it existed three years ago, but I cannot continue paying interest on my accumulated debt, which will increase again this year if wheat prices remain as at present.

The Attorney General: Who will pay it?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I am prepared to pay on that proportion of my indebtedness to which I have alluded, but I cannot pay interest on the accumulated debt.

The Attorney General: But tell us who will pay it.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Surely the Attorney General does not want me to repeat myself? Is it not reasonable that the banks who advanced me money to encourage me to go on with improvements, should take a share as the result of the mistakes that were made. Why should I carry the whole of that burden?

The Attorney General: It is your debt. Who do you say should shoulder it? Someone else?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: We cannot expect reform from a man who holds the views indicated by the Attorney General.

The Attorney General: What are my views?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: If we are to take the Shylock point of view, there is no reply to the Minister's question. On the other hand, if we take the human point of view, it is easy to furnish a reply. Unless we are to have regard for the interests of humanity and think of the condition of the women and children to-day—

The Attorney General: Don't talk like that!

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The Attorney General can talk about capital and the payment of interest on it.

The Attorney General: When did I do so?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The Minister says that it is right that I should pay my interest.

The Attorney General: I asked who would pay it if you did not do so.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Should not the banks suffer some loss just as I have to

do. Why should not the banks share in the loss. The Minister waxed eloquent about equality of sacrifice when he called upon the workers to forego some of their wages and to pay more taxation. When it comes to a question of equality of sacrifice as between the banking institutions and the farmers, then the Minister asks, "Who will pay?" The Minister did not hesitate to make the workers pay when their wages were under discussion.

The Minister for Railways: And that is what you are proposing now. You want to push something more on to them. Who will pay this if they do not?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The financial institutions must appreciate the fact that they must bear a portion of the indebtedness of the community as a whole. They must appreciate the impossibility of the farmers paying interest on the losses they have sustained during the last three years, and that the payment of that financial burden must be a matter for mutual concern and mutual overcoming. We must get together to that end. I am sure that the farmers are agreeable to recognising their just indebtedness, but they say most emphatically that they cannot continue paying the interest they are called upon to pay to-day. They are asked to meet compound interest charges and if that continues, we shall all be overwhelmed shortly. One can go on talking at length, but no result is achieved. I appeal to the Government to realise there are means of overcoming the difficulties of the present time. A state of emergency does actually exist, and everyone is hard up against it. No section of the community should get off scot free. It is a Government responsibility. There is no other way of dealing with the problem. It is by legislation and Government activity only that present conditions can be rectified. I submit to the Government that this question should receive immediate attention. I do not appeal on behalf of the wheatgrowers more than on behalf of the woolgrowers. Both sections have suffered losses as the result of the fall in commodity prices overseas, and should not be called upon to pay interest on their total losses, which should be funded under conditions that will provide ample time for repayment. I have taken no part in the debates when palliatives have been suggested and pettifogging means of relieving unemployment have been proposed. The scheme I have indicated can

be put into operation, and if that were done, it would give new life and hope to those who are depressed and downhearted to-day. It can be done, and I submit the scheme to the Government for immediate attention.

**MR. BROWN** (Pingelly) [8.55]: The Lands Department is the most important of the Government departments. The prosperity of the State is dependent upon its activities. The man who is to-day trying to tickle the earth and produce from it, is unfortunately in a bad way, and something must be done to assist him. The Government must see to it that he is kept on the land. In the course of my remarks I may at times appear to be rather drastic and say things that are not pleasant to hear. I shall not speak in any spirit of animosity. I will first deal with the position in connection with soldier settlement. When the war was concluded and the soldiers were returning from the Front, people realised that something had to be done to help them. Naturally those who had a liking for the land desired to engage in farming operations. The Government of the day realised the position and found that it was necessary to repurchase a number of large estates. I will refer to the Noombling estate for a start. The other night there waited upon me a deputation representative of the Noombling branch of the Returned Soldiers' League. The facts that they placed before me would not make pleasant reading. I asked a series of questions dealing with the Noombling estate and although I did not hear all the replies given by the Minister, I did understand him to say that the average price paid for it was 30s. per acre. Some of that land has been taken up at £4 and £4 10s. an acre, although other parts of the estate may have been priced as low as 7s. 6d. an acre. In the circumstances, the average price may be nearer 30s. an acre. The Minister also said that 13,000 acres had been taken up as a poison lease at a very low figure which would work out at about 1s. per acre. It was taken on condition that the poison would be eradicated from the holding. I have reason to believe that not one poison bush has been cleared off that 13,000 acres, although the Government bought it at an average price of 30s. an acre. Members can imagine the position of a soldier sett-

ler who took up a block of 1,000 acres in that area. Immediately he took possession he had to pay interest on the full purchase price and interest in those days was  $6\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., although it is now 4 per cent. or 5 per cent. The settler had 25 years in which to pay off his indebtedness. In many instances, the land was virgin country, covered with poison bush and thickly timbered. I ask any reasonable man: How on earth settlers could make good on such holdings? It has been impossible for them to succeed. They got behind in their interest payments, and they had to borrow money from the Agricultural Bank, with whom they also had to make arrangements regarding the provision of machinery and stock. In a very short time, a large amount of money was owing on every block and conditions became deplorable. Those men now say it is impossible to carry on any longer, and something must be done by the Government to assist them. Either the Government should write off their indebtedness or apply conditional purchase arrangements to their holdings. If the latter course were pursued, the land would be priced at about 10s. or 15s. an acre, and they would have 20 years to pay off the indebtedness. In addition to that, every 6d. the settlers paid off would lessen the indebtedness to that extent. On the other hand, under soldier settlement conditions, the men have to go on paying interest on the full purchase price. It is unreasonable to expect even settlers of experience to make good under such conditions. I urge the Government to apply C.P. conditions to the soldier settlers. If their holdings are re-valued and they are assessed at present market rates, the position would be considerably easier. Under such conditions the settlers may be able to do some good and make homes for themselves. I am sorry I have to speak in this manner. I do not know whether the conditions of the Noombling Estate apply equally in respect of other repurchased estates. I do not think the conditions are as bad elsewhere, because the land on the Noombling Estate is not very suitable for wheatgrowing. The country is heavily timbered, and carries considerable poison, and before it can be made productive, a tremendous amount of money must be spent on it. Interest charges are accumulating. If the interest were de-

ferred for three, four or five years and after that period added to the principal, the settlers would be in a worse position than they are to-day. That suggestion is of no use. The holdings will have to be revalued, and reconstruction will be necessary. The settlers will have to work under a different system. I do not say that everyone of those settlers is not meeting his interest commitments. A few of them may be, but the settlers who are in a position to pay a little interest are men who went on the land with some capital of their own. After the war, when the Government were repatriating the returned soldiers, farms galore were offered to the Government. Men could see an opportunity to get rid of their holdings, and they asked good prices for them, and the soldiers paid prices that the holdings were not worth. They were in debt from the very inception of their settlement. That was not in the best interests of the country. The Government must realise that considerable loss is inevitable in connection with repurchased estates. It is impossible for those men to make wheatgrowing pay with wheat at half-a-crown a bushel. The average along the Great Southern is not more than 10 bushels per acre, and ten bushels at half-a-crown, with costs of production so high, is not sufficient to give a man a living and enable him to meet his obligations.

The Minister for Lands: Is that the value of the land along the Great Southern?

Mr. BROWN: I am speaking of the Noombling Estate.

The Minister for Lands: You said along the Great Southern.

Mr. BROWN: I said that the average along the Great Southern was not more than 10 bushels. I admit that there is mixed farming, but some of the settlers on the Noombling Estate are unable to run sheep on account of the poison. The Government paid up to 20s. an acre for land that cost the original holders 1s. per acre.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Which Government bought that estate?

Mr. BROWN: I am not saying, and I do not care. The Government, through their officials, bought the estate for an average of 30s. per acre, the total purchase price for the estate being £36,000.

Mr. Hegney: They must have had plenty of money in those days.

Mr. F. C. L. Smith: Free of interest, I doubt whether it would pay.

Mr. BROWN: I doubt whether it would, considering the expense of clearing the land and making it productive. In the course of time the land will be made productive, but the cost will be considerable. The Minister for Lands believes that it would make good dairying country. He established an experimental plot on which to grow clover. On that I compliment him. If clover will adapt itself to the country, the land will become valuable, but I have been told that where the Government planted 50 acres of clover, private enterprise also put in an area, and the germination was so poor that hardly a plant could be found. Consequently it will be expensive to establish clover on that land. Fresh valuations will be necessary, together with a considerable writing-down, and the land will have to be put under the conditional purchase system. Who is going to bear the loss? Must those settlers vacate their holdings? If the Government exercised their powers they could say, "If you do not pay your interest, out you go." But if they did that, what would become of the land? It would revert to its virgin state and become worthless. The deputation told me that a man on sustenance was in a far better position than were those settlers who were trying to make a home.

The Minister for Lands: I have heard that said before, but I think you could satisfy them that the statement was not correct.

Mr. BROWN: Well, that is what they said.

The Minister for Lands: Of course they did.

Mr. Sleeman: You tell them to walk out and try the sustenance.

The Minister for Lands: I know who would be the worse off.

Mr. BROWN: Those men do not know what is ahead of them, whereas the sustenance man knows that at the end of the week he will receive 22s. 6d. or £2 9s. as the case may be. Those settlers have nothing. If members went to some of the holdings and saw the conditions under which the people are living, they would have some sympathy for them.

The Minister for Lands: I wish I had known you were going to bring up this matter. I would have brought some of the files to show you.

Mr. BROWN: I am informed that a man walked off his holding and left on it four horses and a good three-knife chaffcutter.

The lot was sold privately for £24, whereas I was told one of the horses alone was worth £25. The settlers maintain that if the sale had been properly advertised, those chattels would have brought a much better price.

Mr. Sleeman: Who was responsible for that?

Mr. BROWN: Perhaps the Minister will tell us. Those chattels were sacrificed. Another man tendered for a block of land and the implements on it were sold after his tender went in.

Mr. F. C. L. Smith: That is not right.

Mr. BROWN: No.

Mr. Marshall: Then he need not have gone on with the tender.

Mr. BROWN: I do not suppose he did. He tendered conditionally upon the implements being there.

Mr. F. C. L. Smith: Who was responsible for that?

The Minister for Railways: You have not confirmed that statement, have you?

Mr. BROWN: No; it was mentioned to me only a few days ago. As to farmers generally, there are holdings of 1,600 to 1,500 acres carrying indebtedness to the extent of £3,000 to £6,000. It is impossible to imagine how those men amassed such a load of debt. Practical men would be needed to ascertain how they reached such a position. The fact remains that they are so indebted. Some holders of 1,000 acres owe as much as £4,000.

Mr. Hegney: Have those farmers motor cars?

Mr. BROWN: I am not aware of it. With wool, wheat and stock at the present prices, and with the cost of production high, it is impossible for those men to pay interest on their indebtedness and make good. I think there must be a considerable writing-down of debts, but every case will need to be considered on its merits. There may be a dozen and one reasons why farmers became so heavily involved.

Mr. Marshall: The Agricultural Bank already has the power to write down debts.

Mr. BROWN: But the Agricultural Bank, like other institutions, wants to get as much money as possible. It was stated originally that the Agricultural Bank would, in the course of time, become self-supporting. If the people had been prosperous, the bank would have been self-supporting. When a man paid his interest and started to pay off the principal, there would have been

money to finance other settlers. Many thousands of pounds are owing to the bank, but can the country afford to put heavily involved settlers off their holdings? Is it not better to retain them to produce something? Are not they the best asset we have to keep the State going? This is a primary producing country, and if a holding is long vacated, it reverts to nature. Sometimes tenders are submitted for abandoned farms £1,000 or £2,000 less than the debt, and such tenders have often been accepted.

The Minister for Railways: I am glad we are getting near to the 5th of November when we can burn a lot of that stuff.

Mr. BROWN: I have been trying to find a solution for the farmers' difficulties, but I can see no escape from making a considerable loss. Can the State afford to make such a loss? The position will have to be faced. Western Australia is as good a wheatgrowing State as any in Australia, but our farmers are working under such difficulties that it is impossible for them to bear the enormous load of debt under which they are labouring.

Mr. Hegney: There are difficulties in every country in the world.

Mr. BROWN: I am aware of that. It is for the Government to discover how to keep those men on the land and enable them to carry on.

The Minister for Railways: I noticed a few country cars at the cricket match the other day.

Mr. BROWN: I do not know whether a solution will be found by creating an artificial price. The bonus paid on wheat has to be found by the community at large. If it is to be only for a short period, it might be in the best interests of the State to give the farmers a bonus to enable them to carry on. I hope the  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. bonus will be repeated. Last year it was a big help to the farmers, and had it not been for that bonus many of them would not be on the land to-day. Very few growers have been able to reduce the principal debt they owe, and very few have been able to pay any interest whatever. We must do our utmost to keep the men on the land.

Mr. Hegney: Do you suggest writing off their debts?

Mr. BROWN: Not all. Some people suggest that the interest should be funded for five years. If the money is added to

the principal the settler will be worse off than ever. Indications are that low prices for wheat and wool will endure for a long time. What has been can be again. It may be that prices will go up soon. The man who is producing something must be fostered. If he is not kept on the land the country will go down. Perth is living on the man outback. I now wish to refer to the settlers who were induced to take up land around Lake Carnody. I admit I was one of the supporters of the 3,500 farms scheme. I thought that at Forrestania we were going to have one of the biggest wheat settlements in the State. If a railway could be built through to that locality and water facilities afforded, Forrestania and Lake Carnody would produce a great deal of wheat. After the settlers were put on the land there, the Government appointed a scientist to analyse the soil. Right in the middle of a standing crop going five to six bags to the acre, I understand this scientist dug holes in order to test the soil. In some cases he condemned the ground as being too salt for the growing of cereals. Of course I cannot argue against the scientist.

The Minister for Railways: You are not justified in making that statement.

Mr. BROWN: I was told that he dug a hole in the middle of a standing crop.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is not the only funny thing you were told.

Mr. BROWN: In that condemned area about 2,000 acres have been brought under cultivation. Many of the settlers have now been transferred to abandoned blocks with which the original holder could do nothing. The debt upon those blocks amounts to the full capacity of the advances that can be made upon them. No implements were available and the improvements were of little value. That was one of the worst things the Government could have done. No settler could exist on land so heavily burdened with debt.

Mr. Sleeman: That is a motion of no-confidence in the Government.

Mr. BROWN: I do not say this Government is any worse than previous Governments. They were forced to do something for these settlers because Dr. Teakle had condemned their holdings.

The Minister for Railways: Of course we picked out the best farmers in the State,

dispossessed them, and put the worst farmers upon their blocks.

Mr. BROWN: I have it on the best of authority that one man was placed on a block without either implements or horses and yet there was a debt of £2,000 upon it. He could get no further advance nor any sustenance. He was obliged to sell a water tank for £2 or £3 in order to provide his wife and children with food. A great mistake was made in putting settlers on to abandoned blocks of that kind. The people in the Lake Carmody district are quite satisfied that, if given a fair deal, they can make headway, but it is impossible for them to grow wheat successfully and cart it 50 miles to a railway, especially when they have no water facilities. The Agricultural Bank will advance no more money on those blocks which have been condemned by the scientist.

The Minister for Lands: I shall be glad to give your speech to the bank trustees tomorrow. You are not fair to them or to the settlers.

Mr. BROWN: The trustees can do nothing else. It would not be policy to go against the scientist. A little further away from the condemned areas the settlers are only too anxious to stay on. I have the greatest regard for the officials of the Agricultural Bank, for they are amongst the best officers we have in the State. They have a big responsibility and the Government look to them to make the bank pay.

*[Mr. Panton took the Chair.]*

Mr. Sleeman: You have a peculiar way of showing your regard.

Mr. BROWN: What the bank needs is money.

Mr. Hegney: Where will you get it?

Mr. BROWN: We are told that if we had secession we should get what money we wanted on the London market.

Mr. Marshall: Borrow and spend!

Mr. Hegney: Do you think secession would help the farmers?

Mr. BROWN: Ambition is being knocked out of the younger men. I have been told that numbers of settlers have been put upon abandoned blocks where they are expected to make a living.

The Minister for Railways: How do you know they have lost their ambition?

Mr. BROWN: They have told me so.

The Minister for Railways: Let the young men speak for themselves.

Mr. BROWN: I do not say the Government are to blame, except that they were too liberal in the first place by advancing too much money against the holdings. Some time ago I asked whether the Government intended to renew the wheat-carting subsidy. Yesterday I received a telegram from the Wheatgrowers' Union at Lake Carmody as follows:—

Urge you to make strongest representations for continuance of wheat-carting subsidy. Fuel supplies are not at present available without guarantee of subsidy, nor can settlers finance carting their wheat from proceeds of harvest at present low prices. Please inform us of position.

The Minister for Lands: You did not know a word about it until you were told the Government were considering the matter, and they now send that wire to you.

Mr. BROWN: I was told that the announcement would be made at the proper time. I hope I may now reply that the subsidy will be renewed. I am positive the Government will do their best to help these people.

Mr. Marshall: What will you do if it is not given?

Mr. BROWN: These settlers are 50 miles from a railway and wheat will have to be carted by motor vehicles. If farmers have to use horses they will have to be away from their holdings for a whole week at a time.

Mr. Corboy: What will they do if they have no carting subsidy?

Mr. BROWN: I have only been asked to urge the Government to give it.

Mr. Marshall: You have done your job well.

Mr. BROWN: All I was told was that at the proper time the matter would be considered. I have a lot of sympathy for the Government. The Opposition are thanking their stars that they are not on the Ministerial side of the Chamber contending with present difficulties. I have also to-day received a letter asking me to urge the Government to reinstate the carting subsidy. If some of the settlers left their holdings in that locality, the other settlers would be isolated, with no prospect of securing a railway. When in company with the Chief Secretary at one of the centres. I saw a

school which was attended by a number of children; but that centre is deserted now. I was sorry to hear the member for Guildford-Midland say there was no possibility of another railway being built. Many men now on sustenance could be usefully employed in forming the earthworks of a new line, which would be an asset to the State. A good many railways which have been passed remain to be constructed. To develop our lands we must have railways. It grieves me to have made some of my remarks of this evening, but many settlers are threatened with the loss of the results of the work of their lives, and with the prospect of going out into the world not knowing what to do. We must keep our settlers on the land and make them prosperous. Prices we cannot regulate, but must rely on the world basis. Nevertheless, we should do our utmost to make our primary producers contented, so that the State may be kept going. I hope for an assurance from the Minister as to the carting subsidy.

**MR. GRIFFITHS** (Avon) [9.33]: I cannot let this vote pass in silence, particularly after listening to the member for Mt. Magnet. That hon. member tendered advice to Country members regarding the manner in which they might obtain the ear of the Chamber for grievances. I refer more particularly to the discussion on the report of the Royal Commission on farmers' disabilities. To that discussion four hours were devoted, and every phase of the report was examined. During the debate city members did not seem to be impressed with the importance of the report. When after a careful analysis of the document I read out pointed extracts from it, I was repeatedly interrupted by the Leader of the Opposition and his deputy, who, whilst claiming that they had read the report, were bored stiff by some pertinent and valuable extracts. When dealing with one phase of farmers' troubles, the supply of sheep dip, I drew attention to the duty placed upon poison, netting and other things, and incidentally sheep dip. I was told there should be a dip for the member for Avon. I mentioned the excessive duty on boring plants, and the Leader of the Opposition said there should be a tax on bores. I mentioned embargoes and again I was told there should be embargoes in this place. Many of the Royal Commission's recommendations were

carried out. As to the future, members know I have raised my voice constantly, both here and in the Press. Meantime we look forward with interest to the Premier's return from the Eastern States. The committee formed at the Premier's Conference, made certain recommendations. There was to be legislation for the whole of Australia to give farmers security of tenure, and protection for five years. The adjustment of liabilities during that period is the best news and most important move for the man on the land that has ever been brought forward. All Governments have considered legislation of a uniform character to meet the difficulties of the primary producer. Our Premier is visiting Melbourne for the purpose of considering the report of that committee, and I look forward with the greatest interest to what he will have to say upon his return. Certain things will have to be brought into operation, including an amendment to the Federal Bankruptcy Act. Such an amendment would enable legislation of a uniform character to be passed by all the States; but later there will have to be something on the lines suggested by the member for Guildford-Midland, in the way of placing debts in cold storage or securing a rate of repayment that will spread over years. These are abnormal times; and in the interests of debtor and creditor alike, things must be eased. A man owing a debt to-day, has to produce two or three times as much stuff in payment as he had to produce two or three years ago. Then comes the question what would be a fair thing. I have here a report by Judge Paine, appointed by the South Australian Government to go into the question of adjustment or cancellation of debts. In a very fine report he says the fixing up of this scheme is cutting both ways. He puts forward the proposal that it would be a fair thing to make an arrangement whereby there would be a cutting down, but if there should be an appreciation provision should be made for a fair thing being done in regard to the other side. Judge Paine admits that it is a matter rather for economists to decide what steps shall be taken. He does not pretend to be able to offer any practical scheme, which he says is a matter for experts, but he emphasises that any scheme adopted should be a Federal scheme throughout the Commonwealth, that an obligation should be imposed upon persons availing themselves of the scheme, that any

such obligation should be proportionate to the onus placed on their credit, and that the affairs of all those participating in the scheme should be subject to central control. What appeals to me is as to what we are going to do in regard to the future. The Minister said this evening that land settlement was going down. I am afraid it will go down very much more unless we can bring about a sense of security amongst the farmers. It was pleasing to hear what the Minister had to say about settlement in the South-West. I do not share the pessimism of the member for Guildford-Midland, who asked who was likely to go down to those places to grow apples. That is what the country is adapted for, and I believe this scheme of the Minister for Lands is going to work out successfully. I will not say anything about the 3,500 farms scheme, for it was a most unfortunate venture. I should like to correct a member who declared the other evening that three members who had spoken here did not grow a grain of wheat. I should like him to withdraw that charge, at all events in its application to me, because I certainly am growing wheat. I have letters from substantial men, men of Tory inclinations, and they make the statement that it is preposterous for the banks to continue to charge the rate of interest they are charging, considering that for the past three years the prices of products have been at a record low level. In to-night's paper regarding bank charges even in the Old Country we get a criticism by a mine magnate as follows:—

The charge of the Light Brigade does not compare with bank charges, Sir Abe Bailey. South African mine magnate told the Royal Empire Society. The "Big Five" banks, he said, have head offices like St. Paul's Cathedral. Every London street has a bank at one corner and a pub at the other and both have liquid assets. The head of the Bank of England plays hide and seek in America as a professional skinner. Surely the banks are inviting rationalisation.

This question of interest is a very big one. That and bulk handling and production costs and gas producer plants are lines to which the Government could devote attention. With that I will conclude, for I have no wish to detain the House any longer.

**MR. ANGELO** (Gascoyne) [9.50]: I am assured by an old resident of Western Australia who was born in Gippsland that

there is quite a number of prospective settlers interested in our lands. This gentleman has just returned from a lengthy holiday trip during which he spent some time in Gippsland, where he had numerous inquiries from old friends and others as to the possibility of obtaining dairy lands in Western Australia. It was not the desire of the older settled farmers there to come over here, but he tells me that a number of those farmers have sons and relatives who cannot obtain land on which to make homes for themselves in Gippsland. My friends tell me he always asked the question as to whether the prospective settlers could bring with them money enough to carry them on, because he had to tell the inquirers that our Government would not be able to assist them to any great extent. He was assured in almost every case that those prospective settlers would bring with them enough money to carry them on for a few years. That class of settler would be most beneficial to us at present, for they would bring money with them and so there would be no need for the Government to supply them with finance. Moreover, they would have a lot of experience in the latest methods of dairying and also in fodder growing. I am told by the Agricultural Bank that there is a number of abandoned farms around Manjimup and in the Pemberton district. It would be good business if our Lands Department would make it known to those people in Gippsland that we have those farms available. It might even pay the Government to send a reliable officer to interview those people and give little talks in a number of centres over there. The Government might say they could never do that, that they could not go into another State to induce local settlers away. But I would remind the Minister it is not a question of inducing settlers away: it is a question of inducing the lads and younger men who cannot obtain land there to come over here. It would be bringing the landless men to the land that requires them, and if we could get men with money enough for their own requirements so much the better.

[*Mr. Richardson took the Chair.*]

**MR. J. H. SMITH** (Nelson) [9.55]: I want to get back to my old story about land undeveloped along existing railways in the



South-West. The member for Guildford-Midland was right in saying there are down there many thousands of acres not available for selection but which should be under cultivation to-day. The Minister for Lands interjected saying that it was held for forestry purposes. But the Minister is aware that before the last general elections the Premier promised the people of the South-West that a reclassification of that land would be made and that land suitable for agriculture would be used for agriculture, the remainder being retained for forestry. Although I have repeatedly asked the Government to fulfil their pledge, nothing whatever has been done. The member for Guildford-Midland said many thousands of farms could be established there. Two years ago I said that from Pinjarra south along the existing railways and road, where schools and all other facilities have been provided, 5,000 farms could be established. Only the other day the Surveyor General told me that if he had a free hand along those railways, if he could break down the forestry regulations he could establish 1,000 farms without taking so much as one acre of forest country. If we analyse the position of our boys to-day and consider the Chandler scheme and the Ugly Men's scheme, we must realise that 70 per cent. of our boys will have to go on the land. Where could we find a better place for them than where we have intense culture in an assured rainfall? It is the duty of the Government to call upon the Surveyor General to have a classification made of those areas forthwith and select land for agriculture, retaining the remainder for forestry purposes. But I must join issue with the member for Guildford-Midland in his condemnation of Nornalup. The hon. member knows that some of the best land we have exists in that area. The Government are on the right track in opening up and developing that country the same as the country around Albany. Recently I had opportunity to visit the Nannup settlement. There is some beautiful land there and the settlement could be extended to hundreds of farms between there and Pemberton. I urge the Minister to pursue the Nannup scheme and the Nornalup scheme and do something about the classification of country dedicated to forests. No one wants to take away any land available to forestry, but whatever is suitable for agriculture should be used for agriculture. As to the

Boyup-Cranbrook railway, if the Minister will again read the Advisory Board's report, he will find there are 2,500 farms along that railway which will make fine holdings for intense culture, dairying and sheep raising. I hope the Minister will hurry on with his land development scheme, and now that the project is in sight and will be completed in the near future I hope he will send his classifiers through and make the land in that district available. In my experience a land board will be required for every block thrown open down there, for there will be at least half a dozen applicants waiting to go before that board. I do not intend to deal with the subject of the land in the group areas. The member for Mt. Magnet referred to that question as did the Minister, and I trust that next week when the Premier returns we shall have an opportunity to discuss those problems, the disabilities that exist in the South-West. Under present conditions things are extremely hard for the settlers. In fact I see no hope for land settlement anywhere in the State, whether it be wheat farming or dairying, unless interest rates are reduced by one half. Interest has come down from 6 to 5 per cent. and from 4½ to 4 per cent. But the only way in which we can do any good, and by which we can keep people on the land is not by granting bounties, but by a reduction of interest and the lowering of capitalisation. The Minister to-night spoke of the wonderful season, the fruit growers experienced last year, and he referred particularly to Mt. Barker and Bridgetown. I can tell the Minister of instances of losses having been sustained by fruit growers who sent their products away on consignment. One man in particular sent 700 cases, and received a debit note of £30. Thus it will be seen that even the fruit industry is languishing because of the absence of decent prices.

The Minister for Agriculture: Did he get an advance on that fruit?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: No, he sent it away on consignment, and he received a debit note of £30.

The Minister for Agriculture: Did the fruit arrive in good condition?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: It did. This is only one of dozens of cases that I could quote. Hardly one orchardist got anything back. One man sent away a thousand cases, and

he was considerably in debt over it. Buyers did offer 6s. 6d., but the growers held off in the hope of getting a better price. Unfortunately there was a cessation of buying and soon after the fruit was sent away on consignment the bottom dropped out of the market. I surmise the Minister for Lands got his information from the Minister for Agriculture. If he makes inquiries he will find that the fruiterers of Mt. Barker are in the same unfortunate position as are those of Bridgetown. I hope the Minister for Lands will do something with regard to the areas alongside our existing railways. Some of the finest land in the South-West is held up. One will notice a beautiful farm and alongside there is an area held up for forestry purposes. Then one will see in the middle of beautiful country a holding running dairy cows and all around it forestry land of similar value. Is it the policy of this Government to do as the Minister for Forests said? He admitted that in the areas dedicated to forestry there was a good deal of excellent agricultural land, and then he enlarged on the subject. He said that the Forests Department proposed to allot those areas to men engaged in the timber industry, that those men would be encouraged to take up blocks. If that is the case, I am distinctly opposed to it. I am not against timber workers having a block of land but I consider that the whole of that country should be classified and that the good land should be taken up for agricultural purposes, and the forest country retained for forest purposes. I urge the Minister for Lands to take into consideration the points that I have raised.

**MR. CORBOY** (Yilgarn-Coolgardie) [10.6]: We should take into consideration the difficulties that are confronting wheatgrowers at the present time. The member for Nelson referred to the subject of the reduction of interest. That is a very important question as far as the wheatgrowers are concerned. The burden of interest on money raised on their behalf in years gone by, in those years when we were prosperous, should now receive very serious attention. Farmers are still being asked to meet a rate of interest on the money raised in those days which is altogether out of proportion to their ability to pay. The Government should

have regard for the position of the industry and rectify the matter.

The Minister for Lands: Tell us what to do.

**MR. CORBOY**: The only thing you can do is to put it on the man who lent the money to accept a rate of interest that you can pay and that the farmer can pay.

The Minister for Lands: What rate of interest are we charging the farmer to-day?

**MR. CORBOY**: It would average, I suppose, over  $5\frac{3}{4}$  per cent.

The Minister for Lands: Nothing of the sort.

**MR. CORBOY**: I am glad to have the Minister's assurance, but I want to remind him that for the last two or three years it has been impossible for the settlers to pay any interest, and they were being charged as much as 6 and  $6\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., and that interest is to-day capitalised and is being charged up on capital account at a rate that it was impossible for the farmers to meet then. What chance therefore, have they of getting out of their trouble?

The Minister for Lands: It applies just the same to a man paying for his house in the city, and indeed to everyone.

**MR. CORBOY**: You are putting a burden on the man growing wheat that he cannot possibly carry. I appreciate that it also applies to city people, but do not forget that the man buying his house in the city or suburbs is relying on the farmer to make it possible for him, that is, the city man, to pay for his house.

The Minister for Lands: You know that many who built houses have not a shilling with which to pay to-day.

**MR. CORBOY**: They are all relying on the farmer to help them to pay.

The Minister for Lands: And on the money the Government are borrowing.

**MR. CORBOY**: I thought the Government were not borrowing any money: I thought it was impossible to borrow money to-day.

The Minister for Lands: You know we borrowed money last year.

**MR. CORBOY**: Whenever we ask you to do anything in the way of relief for unemployment, the excuse of the Leader of the Government is that he cannot give it because he cannot borrow any money.

The Minister for Lands: Cannot borrow enough to give them what you ask.

Mr. Kenneally called attention to the state of the Committee.

Bells rung and a quorum formed.

Mr. CORBOY: An effort should be made to evolve a scheme whereby a reduction in interest rates might be effected. On quite a number of occasions cases have come under notice in which farms have been forfeited because the holders could not meet their commitments to the bank. The blocks have then been thrown open for selection, and although not one half-penny reduction in interest could be given to the man who had to throw up the block, the Agricultural Bank found it possible to materially reduce the amount to the man who subsequently took it over. Men who have done the hard pioneering work are sent off their blocks because they cannot pay the interest bill at 6 per cent., under which conditions they have accumulated a huge indebtedness, and the bank has allowed other men to take up the blocks at the lower rate of interest, with the old interest indebtedness wiped off. I hope more serious consideration will be given by the Minister and the trustees of the Agricultural Bank to the former type of farmers, and at least give them an opportunity to take over their holdings at what is regarded as a fair valuation. I hope the Government will continue to press the Federal Government to agree to resume the payment of the wheat bonus, and that they themselves will continue the payment of the carting subsidy that proved of such advantage last year. There are one or two small matters I wish to refer to. The first relates to the position of the settlers in the Lake King and Lake Carmody country. In fact, my remarks refer to that portion of the State that was concerned in the 3,500 farms scheme. It is time that some definite announcement was made as to the position of the settlers there. Are they to get a railway, or are they not? The settlers have been there for upwards of four years and have done an immense amount of work. They have put up with intolerable conditions. I was one of the settlers in the Lake King area and I had to cart my wheat for a distance of 52 miles to the siding. I was the nearest settler to the siding, and others had to cart for 60 or 70 miles. Although I endeavoured to get from the Minister before tea, by way of in-

terjection, some definite indication as to the position of those settlers, he did not respond to my invitation.

The Minister for Lands: I like your story to-day! Your party had six years in office while those farmers were settled on the country.

Mr. CORBOY: We had nothing of the sort, and it is unfair of the Minister to say so.

The Minister for Lands: You know you did.

Mr. CORBOY: The Minister knows I was during our last 18 months in office that the settlers were on their blocks.

The Minister for Lands: Only 18 months. What about the soldier settlers at Karlgarin?

Mr. CORBOY: I am not speaking about them but about the settlers under the 3,500 farms scheme. The Minister knows they were put on their blocks not more than 18 months before the Labour Government went out of office.

The Minister for Lands: It was more than 18 months.

Mr. CORBOY: It was not. The Minister should be fair, and should not suggest that the former Minister for Lands had those settlers under his direction for six years.

The Minister for Lands: The Karlgarin people were there for six years.

Mr. CORBOY: They were there before the former Minister for Lands took charge.

The Minister for Lands: And they were left there for six years without a railway.

Mr. CORBOY: That is true; I am not talking about that, but about the people in the lake country. They should at least know from the Government definitely as to whether they should remain there or leave their holdings. The Minister for Lands very carefully avoided giving any information as to what is likely to happen. He merely said that negotiations were to be continued, and he still hoped to get the Commonwealth and Imperial authorities to realise the obligations they had entered into. Incidentally, they claim they know nothing of any such responsibility to the settlers.

The Minister for Lands: I think you were present at a wonderful function in the bush to celebrate the scheme.

Mr. CORBOY: To which scheme does the Minister refer?

The Minister for Lands: The 3,500 farms scheme.

Mr. CORBOY: I was not, but I was at a deputation to the Minister at the crossroads, when he said very definitely that he would take no notice whatever of the opinions of the so-called experts, and that it was a pity we had ever heard the word "experts" in connection with the agricultural district. Now, as Minister for Lands, he is sticking to the experts.

Mr. Sleeman: That is what you call "dirty work at the crossroads."

Mr. CORBOY: That is so.

The Minister for Lands: You know I never made any such statement, not a word of it. Dr. Teakle was present at the meeting when I spoke.

Mr. CORBOY: The Minister said it was a pity that the experts were ever asked to report on that country.

The Minister for Lands: I may have said that.

Mr. CORBOY: You also said you would take no notice of them.

The Minister for Lands: I did not.

Mr. CORBOY: Of course you did. But that sort of talk will not get us anywhere. The Minister very adroitly avoided giving an answer to my interjection.

Mr. Patrick: The former Minister for Lands said the settlers were never promised a railway when they went out to their blocks.

Mr. CORBOY: I do not care what the former Minister for Lands, the member for Mt. Magnet said. I was one of the settlers and I went on my block on the definite undertaking from the previous Minister that we would get a railway.

Mr. Marshall: At any rate, it was always the policy to follow up with railway facilities.

Mr. CORBOY: That is so.

Mr. Marshall: You should be fair to him, because he may not have given a definite undertaking.

The Attorney General: Was it an undertaking or an understanding?

Mr. CORBOY: Perhaps it was an understanding. The Minister may desire to split straws. The settlers are not lawyers and all they want to know is whether they will get their railway. Irrespective of whether the former Minister for Lands did or did not promise a railway, the matter of moment to them now is whether there is any prospect of getting a railway in the immediate

future. The Minister will not make any statement on that point.

The Minister for Lands: You know exactly what I said before, and if that does not satisfy you, I cannot go any further.

Mr. CORBOY: But the Minister's statement does not advance the position at all. The settlers are entitled to know definitely whether there is any prospect of railway facilities being provided within the next five years or so. The Government should be honest with the settlers and let them know definitely where they stand. It is certain the settlers cannot continue growing wheat 50 or 60 miles away from a railway, with wheat at 2s. 9d. a bushel. I appeal to the Government to clear up the position. The settlers contend that the crops indicate that the land is all right, but I will be candid and say I am not convinced on that point. If the Minister is, then it is his duty to give the settlers an assurance that as soon as possible—and he should state a period—railway facilities will be provided.

The Minister for Lands: You know that is impossible.

Mr. CORBOY: Will the Minister give the settlers an assurance that a railway will be constructed when possible? I will accept that. The Minister, by his silence, indicates he is not prepared to shoulder the responsibility, although he has abused the Commonwealth and Imperial authorities for not accepting the responsibility themselves. I appeal to the Government to issue a definite announcement regarding the position of the settlers I have referred to. I sincerely thank the Government for pushing on with the survey of the railway from Southern Cross southwards through the miners' settlement. Those men afflicted with miners' phthisis have been put on a settlement where they can work in the open air and regain their health under the blue skies, instead of working in the darkness underground. They have been given an opportunity that will be made even more promising when they are provided with transport facilities. The fact that the Government have commenced the survey of the line is a good augury for the future. I trust that the Government will follow the survey as quickly as possible—this year, I hope—by constructing the necessary earthworks and providing the rails etc., to give those men a chance to market their harvest to the best advantage. May

I suggest to the Minister in passing that it is only necessary to build a spur line connecting with the Lake Grace-Karlgarin line, and that 45-lb. rails would suffice. The Minister said the difficulty was that he could not buy rails. I suggest that there is a considerable length of railway—the Horseshoe line—built of 45-lb. rails that are simply rusting, and that could be used not only to serve the miners' settlement but to serve other areas that I know of. The earliest opportunity should be taken to use some of the money now being made available for unemployed relief to construct the earthworks and lay the rails.

[*Mr. J. H. Smith took the Chair.*]

Mr. Marshall: Cannot you take some line other than that one?

Mr. CORBOY: That is the only line I know of which is idle. It was built two or three years ago to transport manganese.

The Minister for Lands: The company built it.

Mr. CORBOY: The Government are interested to the extent of £128,000 for material supplied.

The Minister for Lands: I do not think so.

Mr. CORBOY: I refer not to the present Government but to the Government of the day. Western Australia has invested some £128,000 in material in that line, and in some three years I believe the investment has earned a total revenue of about £7. The 45-lb. rails could well be utilised to construct the 33 miles of line necessary to provide the miners' settlement with facilities, and there would be 80 or 90 miles of rails over to serve other districts.

The Minister for Lands: The Horseshoe line is not that long.

Mr. CORBOY: I understand it is about 130 miles.

Mr. Marshall: No, 83 miles.

Mr. CORBOY: Well, less than half that mileage of rails would serve the miners' settlement.

Miss Holman called attention to the state of the Committee.

Quorum formed.

Mr. CORBOY: In conclusion, I appeal to the Minister to put the settlers east of the Great Southern out of their misery. Let them know their prospects. Are the Government going to shoulder the responsibility of saying, "You are our settlers and we

have to give you a railway," or are they going to sit back in the traces and do nothing unless the Imperial and Commonwealth authorities shoulder their share of the responsibility? It is time those people were told what is going to happen, and I appeal to the Minister to take the first available opportunity to let them know exactly where they stand.

**MR. NULSEN** (Kanowna) [10.38]: As the isolation of the Esperance settlers causes great disability, it behoves me to say a few words on this department. As the Government are not going to consider the Esperance district in the bulk handling, it is only fair that they should give consideration to the price of the land. If we are labouring under such disabilities and disadvantages owing to our isolation, the high cost of land, the accumulation of interest and other capitalisation, of which it is almost impossible to relieve the settlers, it behoves the Government to reduce the price of land to a reasonable amount. I have been informed that in some districts nearer to Perth—that is, nearer to civilisation—the price of land has been written-down as low as 1s. per acre.

Mr. Corboy: That is owing to the presence of poison.

Mr. NULSEN: Yes. I do not expect a reduction of that kind, but I think a reduction should be granted owing to our distance from the metropolis. The land values at Esperance are far too high. Right from the inception they have been much higher than they should have been. Due consideration was not given to the classification of the land, and since the farmers have settled there they have realised that what they thought was first-class land is only second-class and third-class, whereas what was regarded as second-class and third-class is now known to be first-class. This season under improved methods they are producing a record crop with an average yield of not less than 12 bushels and I feel sure the export for the district will reach 225,000 bags. Not only are we labouring under disabilities in respect to our land, but there is also the jetty. There is a possibility this year of the jetty collapsing altogether, and that, of course, will be another serious disadvantage for the producer. Down there we

are deprived of many advantages enjoyed in more favoured districts, and so I say consideration should be given by the Government to the overcapitalisation of the land.

Mr. Corboy: Land prices constitute one trouble.

Mr. NULSEN: Yes.

The Minister for Lands: They have paid very little rent down there.

Mr. NULSEN: They are still carrying the overcapitalisation.

The Minister for Lands: Not if they are not paying the rent.

Mr. NULSEN: To pay that overcapitalisation they would require 20 bushels to the acre and 10s. per bushel. The Government should consider the writing down of that overcapitalisation. It seems to be the policy of the Agricultural Bank not to write down overcapitalisation for the original farmers. Consideration has simply been given to the personal equation of the farmer. So the farmer who has been overcapitalised leaves his block and someone else comes along and gets the advantage of the writing-down which should have gone to the pioneer of the block. Every farmer entitled to consideration should be put on a business basis. Then if he fails he should be put right off his holding. I have heard members here say that the settlers are paying compound interest. As a matter of fact those in my district have not paid very much interest, but nevertheless the responsibility for the interest has a very depressing effect. I know the Government are doing all they can to secure from the Federal Government a wheat bounty. If it does not come along, and if wheat realises only 2s. 6d. or 2s. 8d., I do not know what is going to happen to the farmers in my district. Years ago we worked out the cost of production, basing it on eight bushels per acre. It serves to show that a person getting only eight bushels per acre would not be able to produce wheat under 6s. or 7s. per bushel. Of course as the yield rises his cost is reduced, and if he gets an average of 20 bushels he might be able to produce for about 2s. 6d. per bushel. If the Commonwealth Government do not give a reasonably good bounty it will be very difficult for a number of farmers in my district to remain on their holdings. I again appeal to the

Government to give consideration to the over-capitalisation in my district and to give relief to the original farmers who pioneered the district.

**MR. WANSBROUGH** (Albany) [10.48]: I want to congratulate the Minister on his action in that settlement on Kalgan Plain. I hope he will extend that settlement. In days gone by all that country was condemned as being not worth classifying. In respect of those settlements I suggest to the Minister that he use his influence to have a road constructed from there to the Nannup lime deposit. It assayed 95 per cent. of lime. This is a commodity essential for that country. If it could be made available to the settlers, it would save the Government a good deal of expenditure in the purchase of super. I also appeal to the Minister to consider the appointment of an advisory board comprising the older settlers of the district. There are many men who went out in the early days, pioneered the country, and have pulled through without any Government assistance. If the officers in charge of that settlement take heed of the advice of those men, they cannot go wrong. The Minister referred to the production of apples. There is not a finer belt of land in the country for the production of apples than this area. Especially will that class of land respond to the growing of pastures. Whilst I am not saying anything against the group settlement scheme, I contend that if the Premier had inaugurated it in this particular district the scheme would have been much further advanced than it is today.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS** (Hon. C. G. Latham—York—in reply) [10.51]: I will have inquiries made into the lime deposits referred to by the member for Albany. If it is possible to secure the lime at a reasonable price, we will avail ourselves of it.

Mr. Wansbrough: You can get it for £1 a ton.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I will find out what fertilising qualities the lime possesses.

Mr. Wansbrough: That information is already in the department.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If it is possible to use it, we will do so. We are working in close co-operation with those

settlers who have so willingly helped the newcomers. Not only have they helped the Government, but they have helped the newcomers by lending them implements, horses, etc. That has meant a great deal more than merely giving advice.

Mr. Wansbrough: They are genuine men.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We shall certainly avail ourselves of their assistance.

Mr. Marshall: Do not stonewall your own Estimates.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If the hon. member asks questions about the mining industry, no doubt he will expect the Minister for Mines to reply. The same thing applies to members representing the agricultural industry. I was rather struck by the remarks of the member for Kanowna. There was a great deal of discussion about whether the railway line he refers to was justified or not. A great deal of money was spent in connecting up the section between the main Eastern Goldfields line and Salmon Gums. From the information given to-night, I do not know whether we were justified in constructing that line. It is very unwise for members to belittle their own districts. Our primary industries are having a bad time just now, but that is applicable to all walks of life.

Mr. Kenneally: The hon. member did not belittle his district.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am speaking generally. He said that the first-class land was not worth what was being charged for it. So I say I do not know whether we were justified in connecting up Salmon Gums with the main line. The Esperance agricultural areas are splendidly situated in that they are 80 miles from a port, which possesses excellent facilities for the shipment of produce. The question of repairs to the wharf can be dealt with at the proper time. Overseas vessels load wheat at Esperance and take it away. The settlers, therefore, are better off than if they had to pay freight on the produce over long distances. The Salmon Gums area has had many difficulties to contend with, but these have, for the most part, been overcome. I do not know whether there has been a change in the nature of the soil, but I believe that the production per acre is increasing. It is inadvisable at the moment to make any reduc-

tion in prices. We do not know what the productive value is going to be. It is easy to be popular when giving away goods belonging to someone else. I do not think we are justified in writing down the value of the people's assets, upon which we have borrowed our money. I hope members will not be too impatient in that regard. In that area it is claimed that there is a good deal of land which is not of first-class value. Consideration has already been given to that matter.

Mr. Nulsen: It has not been effective.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We are not selling any more, but are attempting to lease it in large areas. In a few years it will be ploughed and sown, and in consequence will produce more than it is doing to-day, and will be of greater value. The question of capitalisation is one for the Agricultural Bank. Members have complained because we have written down the liabilities on holdings after the settlers have been dispossessed. It is very often an advantage, if a man has proved over a number of years that he is incapable either physically or otherwise of carrying on his occupation at a profit, to change the personnel of the holder. It would not do to keep a bad farmer, write down his liabilities by 50 per cent., and leave him to build them up again.

Mr. Nulsen: Quite right, but where the personal equation is all right you should give consideration to the original holder.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: A little of that is being done now. I do not think one settler has been put off in the hon. member's district, although some have abandoned their properties.

Mr. Nulsen: Through over-capitalisation and through the lack of writing down.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I would not like to tell members how much money is owing to the bank from that district. If the settlers had to pay no interest whatever, they would still be unable to make ends meet.

Mr. Nulsen: It is not all their fault in a number of instances. It is also the fault of the department.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There may be something in that.

Mr. Nulsen: Because the district is different from other parts of the State.

**The MINISTER FOR LANDS:** The land is, however, showing greater productive value. If that is so, we might wait until the industry reaches the stage when it can meet current expenditure before we begin the writing down process. If we do it to-day in a couple of years we may have to do it again. The member for Yilgarn is trying to make me say something I do not want to say. I desire to be fair to the settlers in the 3,500 farms area. The Government realised their difficulties without any requests being made either from them or from any member. We knew we could not build the railway, and we have made them a payment to compensate them for the long distance they have to cart their wheat. They had grown their wheat, and they had to get it to a siding. Last year, therefore, we paid them 9d. per ton for every mile they had to cart over the first 15 miles. I have told the Chamber that it is a question of whether the Treasurer can find the money, and that matter must remain in abeyance until he returns. There are many demands on the Treasury to-day, and money is extremely difficult to obtain. The hon. member wanted me to state definitely what was the Government's policy in regard to that railway. In reply to an interjection from him, I used these words, which the hon. member can read in "Hansard"—

We intend to try to force the responsibility on the other two Governments, in common with the State Government. When the time comes that we can obtain the necessary funds, the settlers will be furnished with railway communication.

I can only repeat what I said to the hon. member then. I told him further that prospects were rather discouraging, but that as soon as we could find the necessary funds to buy rails, the work would proceed. With the very small amount of money available to-day, I do not consider that a line should be built at once. However, the district justifies a railway, and I hope it will be built at the earliest possible moment. The money available to-day in Western Australia has to be used in the employment of labour. Our first responsibility is to the people as a whole. As soon as possible we shall spend some of our funds on material. I hope the day is not far distant. If the other Governments refuse to admit their liability, there

will be nothing for this State to do but what was done by other districts of Western Australia settled in advance of our lines. I should like to tell the people requiring railways that we will give them lines; but what is the good of making promises which cannot be redeemed? The member for Mt. Magnet evidently has an idea that we are dispossessing farmers in the South-West and placing them on sustenance work at £2 per week. That is not so. The sustenance workers in the South-West are placed on old properties which have been abandoned for some time, and are compelled in their turn to look after the clearing-up of spots which have become overgrown.

**Mr. Corboy:** They do not all get £2 a week.

**The MINISTER FOR LANDS:** No: some of them get only £1 per week. Some of them are doing very well with fowls and a pig or two. It pays to put men there on sustenance rates to look after the bank's securities, which, if left long untenanted, begin to deteriorate. From our point of view we have to find sustenance for those people when they come on the State: it is better to let them do something to earn their wages. The member for Guildford-Midland is rather dismal. He considers that the agricultural industry is in a parlous condition to-day. It has previously had its ups and downs, and I believe will again have good times. If a commodity is good and cheap, people will buy it. The world has previously had its financial ups and downs, and I believe good times will come again. We have heard stories similar to those of the member for Guildford-Midland before, for example from one who wrote in 1848—

In industry and commerce there is no hope whatever.

The Duke of Wellington, on the eve of his death in 1858, said he would be spared from seeing the consummation of ruin that was gathering. Shaftesbury in 1848 said that nothing could save the country from ruin. Wilberforce said, "I dare not marry, the future is so dark and so uncertain." And yet this wonderful old Empire of ours has reached out further and further. What is the use of looking for trouble? There always has been a bright spot ahead. Let us look for that bright spot, and let us tide over our difficulties with as little injury as possible to our people, until we get brighter times.



Hon. P. Collier: Meanwhile millions of people are starving.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is a shocking thing. I do not know that they are actually starving.

Mr. Corboy: They cannot eat the good old flag, you know!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The member for Pingelly comes along to this Chamber and gives notice of questions the answers to which he knows very well. He frequently visits my office, and is told the truth. He complained to-night about Noombling Estate, which was purchased for soldier settlement. It has not been a success, any more than some other estates repurchased for soldier settlement. We paid good cash for the estate, and have had to pay interest on that money, and the estate was unable to meet the demands. I have told the hon. member that this is not a suitable time for writing-down values. They have to be written down at the expense of somebody else.

Mr. Corboy: In good times you will tell the settlers they can afford to meet the payments.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If good times come again, we cannot possibly harass industry to such an extent as to retrieve our old standards. If we wrote-down to-day, in 12 years or two months there would be a request for still more writing-down. At present the settlers are not meeting interest payments or rents, and they are not being harassed. At the right time no doubt whoever is in authority, provided the people on the properties are willing to do their whack, will see that the State stands behind them. An hon. member told some tales; and of course it is all right to come along here with tales that are told, but it does not get us anywhere. If he would state an actual case, we would see that it did not recur in future. The hon. member also told us that the average yield along the Great Southern line was only 10 bushels to the acre. Land there is worth much more from a productive standpoint, and it is a pity that hon. members can so deery the value of our land. It is the only asset the people have, and is all they possess. It is deplorable that members should talk in such a strain. People who lend us money are not likely to do so if they hear the representatives of the people declare that the land has no

value. In Western Australia we must depend upon borrowed money for years to come, and I do not know that the financial interests would be encouraged to make available funds if they were to hear such speeches as we have listened to to-night.

The Minister for Agriculture: The State has got a bad advertisement this evening.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I believe the industry will revive, and that the reproductive value of our land is as great in Western Australia as it is in any other part of the world. I do not know of any other country where wheat can be grown as cheaply as in Western Australia. Our land is not over-capitalised, and the agricultural industry will revive if members will only be patient. The Government have not done anything to harass the people on the land. The banks are lending additional assistance, and the commercial houses are not harassing the farmers, because they know it is useless to do so. On the other hand, they are making further credit available. I hope members will regard the position in a more reasonable way than they have evidenced this evening. It is useless merely extending a sympathetic ear to complaints; members should show the other side of the picture, and make it clear that it is not all a dismal outlook. Although the value of our products is below par to-day, the time will come when there will be an equity in every farm for the man who sticks to his holding. We should extend every encouragement to them to retain possession of their property.

Vote put and passed.

*Vote—Immigration, £898—agreed to.*

*Vote—Town Planning, £856:*

Mr. CORBOY: It is time we cried a halt in what may be regarded as trimmings such as town planning. Of the total estimate of £856, no less than £756 is for salaries only, of which £600 is provided for the salary of the Town Planning Commissioner himself. It is rather extraordinary that the balance of the vote is for two clerks who, in 1931-32, were paid £260, and this year are to be paid £156, representing a reduction of £124. The commissioner is still in receipt of his salary of £600. I may be wrong, but it seems to me

that the Town Planning Commissioner has become a joke in the community. I suggest that in all seriousness. Town planning to-day is a trimming that we can well do without. The commissioner raises objections to all sorts of things being done that people have found tolerable for many years past. They must not be done now because the commissioner does not approve of them. The Government should consider seriously the advisability of abolishing the town planning branch altogether. They should leave it to the good sense of the excellent surveying firms that have practised in Perth for years past to do the decent thing, without the necessity for the supervision of the commissioner. I do not want to move for a reduction of the vote as a protest, but should conditions not improve during the year, I hope the Government will do away with the branch altogether. As it is, the town planning branch has caused a lot of hardship.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS:** The Town Planning Commissioner was appointed when conditions were more prosperous than at present, and he was given a five years' engagement. Even if we dispensed with his services, we would have to compensate him for the remaining portion of his engagement.

**MR. CORBOY:** It might be cheaper to do that. You have a commissioner to boss two clerks.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS:** I do not think the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie understands what the Town Planning Commissioner does. He renders great assistance to local governing bodies, and frequently prevents them making mistakes. The local authorities pay his expenses when he visits country centres.

**MR. CORBOY:** That is not always true.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS:** It is, and I am sorry some hon. members, who have had the benefit of his services, are not present this evening.

**MR. CORBOY:** In my district we benefited by his services, but we did not pay his expenses.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS:** The Town Planning Commissioner visited Southern Cross, and many other country centres, and the local authorities paid his expenses,

apart from his railway fare. I can assure the Committee that the vote has been cut down as much as possible. The board members are not paid for their services except one member who is out of employment, and he receives a fee every time the board meet.

**MR. CORBOY:** We got the Town Planning Commissioner to advise on a work that would cost hundreds of pounds, and he submitted a scheme involving expenditure of thousands of pounds as representing the only feasible proposal.

**HON. P. COLLIER:** I disagree entirely with the remarks of the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie (Mr. Corboy) and I hope the Government will not interfere with the town planning branch during the recess, or until Parliament has an opportunity to deal with the matter further. It is all very well to say that here is a man who has two clerks under him. The clerks, of course, represent nothing. The commissioner is doing valuable work. It is a great pity that he was not appointed years ago. To-day we have streets and buildings sprawling on all sides, and had we had the advantage of the commissioner's services in the past, we would not now have such a spectacle. If the local authorities are to be protected in that way, we shall not have the landscape disfigured in the future as it has been in the past. Consider the country towns in relation to town planning, and everywhere we realise that they have developed without any apparent intelligently laid out plan. We have railway lines running through the middle of townships. The appointment of the commissioner was the best move ever made in this State and the pity of it is that it was not done years ago. Although it may be that the Town Planning Commissioner makes suggestions to Southern Cross or some other town that do not fit in with the ideas of the local authority, is that to say that he is not right? He merely desires to alter the method that has been followed in years gone by. If we allow each road board to say what is right in the matter of town planning, the unenviable experience of the past will be repeated. There is scarcely a townsite that does not cry aloud against the methods that have been adopted, as if to say, "We wish we had had town planners in the years gone by." What is £800 to secure advice as to what should be done instead of following the haphazard catch-as-catch-can style that has obtained in the past.

Mr. CORBOY: I entirely agree with the Leader of the Opposition regarding the layout of country towns. They are a disgrace. They have been established either where they should not have been, or the railway has been run where it should not have been run. I suggest that it is not necessary to have a Town Planning Commissioner to lay out every little country townsite.

The Minister for Lands: He does not advise unless he is requested.

Mr. CORBOY: Our surveyors, if worth the title, should be able to do it.

Hon. P. Collier: They have done the job in the past, and what have they made of it?

Mr. CORBOY: I admit they have made a rotten job of it, but that is the fault of the supervision from the Minister down. It is not necessary to have a Town Planning Commissioner to correct that. A surveyor worthy of the name should be able to lay out a little country townsite without running the railway through the centre.

Hon. P. Collier: But that is just what the surveyors have done.

Mr. CORBOY: Then we are to have a Town Planning Commissioner to direct the surveyor that he must not run a railway through the centre of a country town. I have no objection to town planning as such; it is very desirable. The Leader of the Opposition need not have selected Southern Cross any more than Kalgoorlie or Boulder.

Hon. P. Collier: I did not select it.

Mr. CORBOY: All our goldfields towns have streets worth looking at. At 11 o'clock at night it takes half an hour to cross one of them. The Leader of the Opposition had no need to go beyond Hay-street to find a most shocking example of the need for town planning, but the Town Planning Commissioner has done nothing else but fiddle about with tiddlywinking jobs in the country districts, instead of doing something definite to clean up the rotten position in the capital city.

The Minister for Lands: He has done a lot in the city, too.

Mr. CORBOY: He has not.

Hon. P. Collier: You know nothing about it.

Mr. CORBOY: The City Council have done ten times as much as the Town Planning Commissioner has done, and I am sure that that statement will be backed up by the Attorney General.

Hon. P. Collier: How do you know? Have you discussed it with him?

Mr. CORBOY: No.

The Attorney General: Do not drag me into it.

Hon. P. Collier: How do you know?

Mr. CORBOY: I know I am not backed up by my chief. I have no desire to criticise the officer or his work or his two clerks, but I think it is one of the trimmings we can well afford to do without. No result commensurate with the expenditure is being obtained, even though the expenditure is only a few hundred pounds. I hope the money will be utilised next year in a more serviceable way.

Mr. SAMPSON: Speaking for the road board with which I am associated, it is only fair to say that we have had service from the Commissioner. The absence of any adviser in the past has led to stupid things being done. Roads have been approved that actually ran over cliffs and were quite impossible for traffic. In subdivisional matters the advice of the Commissioner has been most valuable. Subdivisions have been submitted and have been passed, although they did not conform to the Act or to the rudiments of town planning. Rights-of-way have not been provided, and roads have been made of less than the requisite width. In one of the towns of the Great Southern the acute angles of blocks are a source of worry to the owners. It is almost impossible to erect buildings with any pretensions to architectural beauty or utility. While there may be something in the statement of the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie as to the need for economy, I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that the small amount involved in this vote is well spent. I hope nothing will be done to discourage the officer. Once a plan is approved, it is almost impossible to make an alteration, no matter how great the expense incurred.

Vote put and passed.

Vote — Farmers' Debts Adjustment,  
£2,304:

Hon. A. McCALLUM: It is reported that the director, Mr. White, has accepted an engagement in New South Wales and does not intend to return to Western Australia. Is there any truth in the report?

## Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 2nd November, 1932.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: As far as we know, there is no truth in it. Mr. White had accumulated long service leave of about three months, and two months deferred annual leave. I believe he is doing something to assist the New South Wales Government in their legislation.

Hon. P. Collier: How did he come to have so much leave?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He had not taken it. In the early part of last year the Government issued instructions that those who had accumulated leave had to take it. Mr. White was appointed to adjust the farmers' debts, and so could not take his accumulated leave then. He took it as soon as he had cleaned up all the accounts outstanding.

Hon. P. Collier: How much annual leave had he?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Two months deferred annual leave.

Mr. Corboy: Is he receiving salary all the time?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not think so. The original arrangement was that he was to be paid out of pocket expenses while away advising the New South Wales Government. That was the only payment to be made.

Hon. P. Collier: Are the Government allowing annual leave to accumulate now?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, except in special circumstances. In my own department at present there is one officer whose annual leave has accumulated. The instructions are definite that deferred long service leave must be cleaned up while things are slack.

Vote put and passed.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.31 p.m.

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

### BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Land Tax and Income Tax.
- 2, Mortgagees Rights Restriction Act Continuance.

Passed.

### BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT.

Further Recommittal.

On motion by the Chief Secretary Bill again recommitted for the purpose of further considering Clauses 7 and 35.

Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 7—Amendment of Section 34:

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: There was some discussion about this clause when the Bill was previously in Committee. It provides that if any local authority refuses to carry out any order of the Commissioner, it shall be deemed guilty of an offence. There is a proviso, but in my view the members of the board should not be liable to the risk of a penalty nor even be put to the expense of defending any action in court. Having regard to the intention of the Minister to move an additional clause, as was outlined last night, providing for the carrying out of certain requirements for the preservation of health, this clause now under consideration should be reviewed. I move an amendment—

That all words after "hereof" in line 10 be struck out and the following inserted in lieu:—"the Commissioner may thereupon do or cause to be done all or any such acts, deeds, and things as he may think proper in order to effect compliance with the provisions of