

suggested. The Government appreciate the position and desire to protect the people in the pool. If the Minister interferes at all it will be only for the purpose of protecting those in the pool.

Hon. J. EWING: If a contract had been made at 2s. 6d. and the pool fixed the price at 4s., who is to get the difference? The farmer will be the sufferer. I do not see the necessity for having in the Bill a clause which will prevent people doing something which is legitimate business.

Amendment passed: the clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 12 to 15—agreed to.

Clause 16—Balance of money required to be subsequently appropriated by Parliament for the purpose;

Hon. J. M. DREW: I move an amendment—

*That the following proviso be added to the clause:—"Provided that all expenditure in the administration of this Act shall be a charge upon the proceeds of the marketed wheat."*

Amendment passed: the clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 17, 18—agreed to.

Schedule—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments, and a Message accordingly forwarded to the Assembly requesting them to make the amendments, leave being given to sit again on receipt of a Message from the Assembly.

*House adjourned at 10.39 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 29th November, 1916.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 3.0 p.m., and read prayers.

### PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Minister for Works: Perth City Council, by-law relating to sign-boards.

By the Honorary Minister: 1, Cunderdin Local Board of Health, amended by-laws; 2, Fremantle Harbour Trust, amended regulations.

### QUESTION — REPURCHASED ESTATES, BOWES AND OAKABELLA.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM, without notice, asked the Minister for Lands: 1, What was the average price per acre paid by the Government for the Bowes and Oakabella estates, respectively? 2, What is the total area of each estate? 3, What was the cost of subdivision, and of the making available of these lands for settlement? 4, What was the average price per acre chargeable to selectors when the lands were thrown open for selection? 5, What area of each estate has been reserved for public purposes?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, Bowes £1 8s. 5½d., Oakabella 9s. 9¼d. In regard to the Oakabella estate, I should

mention that Crown lands to the value of £4,489 were included, the average price of these Crown lands being 1s. 11¾d. 2, Bowes 38,233 acres, Oakabella 44,941 acres. 3, Bowes £702, Oakabella £981. 4, Bowes £1 11s. 8¾d., Oakabella 15s. 7¼d. 5, Bowes, 1,674 acres, Oakabella 2,490 acres.

#### QUESTION—WHEAT HARVEST, ADVANCE TO FARMERS.

Mr. THOMSON asked the Premier: In view of the inadequacy of the advance on wheat proposed by the Federal Government of 1s. 6d. per bushel, will the Government consider the advisability of supplementing that amount by a further advance of, say, 1s. per bushel out of State Funds?

The PREMIER replied: The Government are alive to the inadequacy of an advance of only 1s. per bushel, but the financial arrangements in connection with the pooling of the forthcoming harvest are at present under discussion by the Australian Wheat Board in Melbourne, and a decision has not been reached as to the amount of the advance to be made to farmers.

#### QUESTION — COAL STRIKE AND FOOD SUPPLIES.

Mr. THOMSON asked the Premier: In view of the possible continuance of the coal strike and the consequent shortage in the supply of necessary food commodities, is it the intention of the Government to safeguard the interests of the consumers and, if necessary, to introduce legislation to regulate such supplies?

The PREMIER replied: The Government will take all necessary steps to safeguard the interests of the people of this State, should the necessity arise.

#### QUESTIONS (2)—ENEMY SUBJECTS IN GOVERNMENT EMPLOY.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON asked the Premier: 1. Is he aware that owing to the Government's instructions regarding the employ-

ment of enemy subjects, serious hardship is being inflicted on naturalised British subjects, who have no connection or sympathy with the country of their birth, having left it in some cases while still infants, and who have married Australian women, and reared Australian families, some of whom are serving with the Australian Imperial Force? 2, Does he realise that through losing Government positions these citizens are unable to obtain other employment, thus causing suffering to the wives and families? 3, Will he take action to see that each case is investigated separately, and thus avoid the unfairness of so general an application of the Government's policy?

The PREMIER replied: (1, 2, and 3.) The Government realise that the carrying out of their policy in connection with the employment of enemy subjects must of necessity inflict some hardship in individual cases. They feel, however, that their decision to exclude from the Public Service all enemy subjects is in the best interests of the State.

Mr. MUNSIE, for Mr. Heitmann, asked the Premier: 1, Is it a fact that a regulation has been adopted providing for the dismissal of all Government servants who were born in an enemy country? 2, Is he aware that the rule is working harshly in some cases, as for instance the following:—A man named Groessler, born in an enemy country, but resident in Australia for 30 years, and a naturalised British subject for 25 years, one of whose sons was killed at Gallipoli, one wounded and returned unfit for further service, and two are at present serving with the army, has been dismissed from the Railway Department at Geraldton. The mother of these boys is a native of New South Wales. 3, Are the Government prepared to exempt from the operations of the regulation those men who have one or more sons who have enlisted?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes. (2 and 3). The Government are aware that the carrying out of their policy must of necessity inflict some hardship in individual cases, but they feel that their decision to exclude from the Public Service all enemy subjects is in the best interests of the State.

### QUESTION—KIMBERLEY CATTLE, GOVERNMENT PURCHASE.

Mr. COLLIER asked the Premier : Whether it is the intention of the Government to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into the charge of attempted bribery, made by the Hon. J. J. Holmes against a public officer alleged to be acting on behalf of the Government, relative to Mr. Holmes's attitude concerning a secret contract for the purchase of 10,000 head of cattle from Messrs. Emanuel Bros., Limited?

The PREMIER replied: No. But if Mr. Holmes makes any specific charge against any officer it will be investigated.

### QUESTION—BRUNSWICK STATE FARM.

#### *Motor Cars on "Field Day."*

Mr. SMITH asked the Minister for Agriculture: What was the cost to the State for hire of motor cars at the Brunswick State farm "field day" on Saturday last?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: Nil. I take this opportunity of thanking the residents of the district for their kindness in lending their cars to take visitors to the farm demonstration.

### QUESTION—DAYLIGHT SAVING.

Mr. VERYARD asked the Premier: 1, Does he propose to bring before the House a Daylight Saving Bill this session? 2, If not, will he seriously consider the necessity of so doing?

The PREMIER replied: 1, No. 2, The relative proportion of day to night in Australia being infinitely greater than is the case in England, the question of a Daylight Saving Bill is not deemed one of urgency.

### QUESTION—WATER SUPPLY DE- PARTMENT.

#### *Storm Water.*

Mr. MUNSIE asked the Honorary Minister: By what authority are the Water Supply Department levying the storm water rate over an extended area this year?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied: By the authority of Section 6, Subsection 4, and Section 92 of "The Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage, and Drainage Act, 1909." The main stormwater drainage system of the Metropolis cost £261,000, and its effect is to improve the sanitation of the Metropolis generally. The annual expenses of this system cannot therefore properly be imposed on only those landholders whose properties are in the immediate vicinity of main drains; and stormwater drainage districts under the Act have consequently been constituted to embrace all lands from which there is a fall into a locality directly served by a main stormwater drain. The levels disclosed by a re-survey last year showed that an additional area should, under this arrangement, be brought within the stormwater drainage district, and this was done under the powers quoted above. The department provide main drains only, and it is a function of the local authorities to provide arterial drains connecting therewith. An extension of the main drain in North Perth has been authorised, and will shortly be put in hand.

### QUESTION—PERTH TRAMWAYS, HAY-STREET WEST SERVICE.

Mr. ALLEN asked the Premier: 1, Is he aware that the residents of the South side of Hay-street, from Harvest-terrace to William-street, West Perth, are without a tram service to the City? 2, Will he take early steps so to see that the service, until recently enjoyed, is restored at the earliest possible moment?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes, *via* Hay-street. 2, Several depositions and petitions have been received by the Minister urging the retention of both lines and the reinstatement of the double service in Hay-street. The Minister having been called to Melbourne, a decision in regard to this has necessarily to stand over until his return.

### SELECT COMMITTEE WHEAT MAR- KETING BILL.

#### *Report presented.*

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY brought up the report of the select committee appointed to

inquire into Clause 7 of the Wheat Marketing Bill.

Report received, read, and ordered to be printed.

#### BILL—ENEMY DISABILITY.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. T. Robinson—Canning) [3.30]: 1 move—

*That leave be given to introduce a Bill for "An Act to impose disabilities on enemy subjects, and certain naturalised British subjects, and other persons, and for purposes consequent thereon or incidental thereto."*

Mr. UNDERWOOD (Pilbara) [3.34]: I do not desire to offer any factious opposition to the introduction of this Bill, but I want to point out that already we have sufficient rubbish on the Notice Paper, and the Government should make an end of bringing down these miserable little Bills. If they go on working with the heads of departments, we shall be kept here eternally tinkering with the Acts we have. I trust that the Government will stop bringing down measures of this description.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. T. Robinson—Canning—in reply) [3.35]: There is no intention of proceeding with the Bill in the immediate future. The Premier leaves for the Eastern States at the end of the week, and by arrangement with the leader of the Opposition it was agreed that this measure should be introduced and read the first time, so that it might be printed, and the Premier would then be able to take it with him to the Eastern States and consult with the Prime Minister and the other Premiers when meeting them in conference. We shall then have their views in regard to the Bill before we proceed with it, and the time of the House will not be unduly taken up.

Question put and passed.

Bill introduced and read a first time.

#### BILL—ROADS ACT CONTINUATION.

##### *All Stages.*

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington) [3.37]

in moving the second reading said: This Bill is merely a formal measure, the object of it being to enable the present Roads Act, which expires on the 31st December, to continue for another 12 months. Unless the measure is passed we shall have no Roads Act next year. 1 move—

*That the Bill be now read a second time.*

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

##### *In Committee, Etcetera.*

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

#### BILL—LOAN, £1,537,000.

##### *Message.*

Message from the Governor received and read recommending the Bill.

##### *First Reading.*

Introduced by the Premier, and read a first time.

##### *Second Reading.*

The PREMIER (Hon. Frank Wilson—Sussex) [3.40] in moving the second reading said: I desire to explain that I propose to follow the procedure adopted in 1912 when I occupied the position of Treasurer, and also that which was followed by my predecessor, namely, to move the second reading of the Bill briefly, and then ask that the debate be adjourned, and subsequently move the next motion on the Notice Paper standing in my name relating to the Loan Estimates. This procedure has been followed in the House on previous occasions. It is realised that the Loan Bill and Loan Estimates are practically inseparable, and that any remarks on the introduction of the Loan Bill must of necessity refer to many of the items on the Loan Estimates and *vice versa*. The schedule of the Loan Bill, which hon. members will see on page 3, is the same as is disclosed in the summary of the general Loan Estimates on page 31, and the items contained therein are briefly explained, as will be seen in the outside column. The Loan Bill

is the authority to the Treasurer to raise money for the works set out in the schedule of the Loan Estimates. There is one special feature in the Loan Bill to which I ought to draw special attention, and it is contained in Clause 7. It will be noticed that this provides for the ratification of the agreement which has been entered into with the Commonwealth Bank to provide an overdraft to the extent of £250,000. The reason for this special accommodation, as I have previously explained to the House, was to enable the advance to be given to the settlers of 4d. a bushel on wheat. This advance was made by the ex-Minister for Lands when he occupied that portfolio and it was over and above the amount which was granted by the wheat pool in Melbourne. It is in addition to the sum total which has been advanced by the wheat pool of 3s. 6d. a bushel and makes the advance to our farmers 3s. 10d. a bushel. It was necessary to provide the local board with funds to make the advance to the farmers, and I deemed it advisable to enter into an arrangement with the Commonwealth Bank. The agreement is not attached to the Bill itself, but a type-written copy has been distributed amongst hon. members, so that they may see the terms and conditions under which the overdraft was arranged. It will not be necessary to use the full authority given, that is to say, we may not find it necessary to overdraw to the full extent of £250,000, because as we make advances a certain portion of them will come back to the Treasury by way of railway freights and refunds to the Industries Assistance Board. Hon. members will see that it is provided in the Bill that it is required to authorise the Government to raise an additional £1,537,000, which will be required for works and the services of the State (as shown in the first schedule) and to authorise certain reappropriations amounting to £40,735 as mentioned in the first and second schedules. It is also to authorise the loan from the Commonwealth Bank. Referring just briefly to the general principles of the Bill, I wish to remark that at the end of the year 1914-15 there was a balance of unraised loan authority to the amount of £2,250,376. This was increased by £1,245,000, being the amount of the last loan Bill, making a total

of £3,495,376, which sum the then Treasurer had authority to borrow. Against this total authorisation he issued the following loans: £1,291,669 at 4  $\frac{1}{8}$ th per cent., being the balance of the loan of £3,100,000 raised by the Commonwealth; and a sum of £750,000 at 5  $\frac{1}{4}$  per cent., which was advanced by the Commonwealth against loan raised by the Imperial Government. Then there was the £140,000 issued in London at 5 per cent., being the purchase of the steamer "Kangaroo," and there were two small amounts of £44,680, local 4 per cent. stock issued at £97 and sold over the counter, and £58,050, local Treasury bills. And there were in addition £178,980 of 4  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. Treasury bills handed to the trustees of the sinking fund in payment of contribution to that fund. The total issues, therefore, have been £2,453,379. There were, however, redemptions amounting to £331,225, leaving the net issues £2,122,154. These items, of course, I need hardly remind the House, were referred to in the details of the Budget. By deducting this amount from the previous total of authorisations we arrive at the balance which was available for flotation on the 30th June last, namely, £1,373,222. That is the balance authorised but unraised. Although this balance nearly covers the gross flotations for the current year, authority must be obtained for the specific works and undertakings as enumerated in the Bill, without which authority the Government would not be justified in proceeding with those works and undertakings. We have, for instance, a sum of £650,000 required for the assistance of settlers. This amount is urgently needed to continue the assistance to the producers of the State, and without it it would be impossible, in many cases, for them to remain successfully on their holdings. It is necessary to provide this further capital because of the fact that it is now proposed to take only one-fifth of the advance made out of the gross proceeds of the settlers' crops each year, instead of taking the whole of the amount, thus spreading the repayments over five years. Then there is the necessary provision for completing the Wyndham Freezing Works, a total of £300,000. This is required for the continuation of the construction of these works, which, I am sorry to think, are going to cost the State very

much more than our predecessors ever anticipated. I am advised that £134,351 was spent last year on this undertaking, and of course much more has been spent since. The completion of the work, however, must be proceeded with. We cannot afford to hold it up, and therefore it is necessary to provide the money. Then provision is made for expenditure on railways, harbours and rivers, and also for finding the further capital which it is proposed shall be provided under the Trading Concerns Act. It is unnecessary for me to deal in detail with the trading concerns, for they will necessarily come up for review on the Loan Estimates; therefore I will leave the explanation at that. The reappropriations deal with balances which are not required at the present time and which may be made available for other work. The principal item is an unexpended balance of £24,500 under the Workers' Homes Act, the reason for this being that it has been decided to temporarily suspend operations under that Act. Furthermore, additional loan capital is not required owing to the repayment of capital. We find there is no great demand for those homes at the present time. I think the ex-Treasurer expressed a similar view last year. Therefore, the provision of loan capital is not required at the present juncture.

Mr. Angwin: What are they doing with the repaid capital?

The PREMIER: It is invested in Treasury bills. The balance has been reappropriated to "Public buildings" together with a small unexpended balance under "State hotels." There is in the schedule an item covering the appropriation of an unexpended balance of £6,203 on the Norseman-Esperance-road, for the purpose of roads and bridges generally. This, of course, is not required now because, if the report of the Royal Commission is favourable, it will be a question of pushing on as fast as possible with the construction of the railway.

Mr. Angwin: You have not provided any vote for it.

The PREMIER: As much as we can at the present. We can only provide what we know we are entitled to raise through the Commonwealth, and what we think we will be able to get.

Mr. Scaddan: That has nothing to do with the Estimates at all. It is a question of expenditure. The £1,700 provided means nothing.

The PREMIER: It does not represent the actual expenditure. As long as the item is there we can excess on it, but I must curtail my Loan Estimates as nearly as possible to the amount of money I can raise. It is governed by that factor. But the works are governed by another factor also, namely, the absolute impossibility at present of obtaining material.

Mr. Scaddan: You have the material there. What you have provided would not be sufficient for wages to use the material.

The PREMIER: We can discuss that on the Loan Estimates. I have not the details of these items, but the hon. member is aware that if we start the Esperance railway and have the material, the fact of the item on the Estimates being insufficient will not interfere with the work.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: I thought you never expended money without the authority of Parliament?

The PREMIER: We do not. The hon. member knows that. As I have said, the main point I am concerned about is the raising of sufficient loan moneys to carry on, and of course to enable us to complete the works at present in course of construction. We are dependent entirely upon what arrangements we can make with the Federal Government.

Mr. Taylor: Are you providing for much new work in the Loan Bill?

The PREMIER: Very little indeed.

Mr. Taylor: What about the Melbourne-road crossing over the railway? There is in the first schedule an item of £50,000.

The PREMIER: I should think a smaller amount would suffice.

Mr. Scaddan: Is it as important a work as feeder roads in the agricultural districts?

The PREMIER: No. However, I do not think there is much hope of constructing the Melbourne-road bridge this financial year. We cannot get the material for work of that description. As I have said, my main concern is to get some definite understanding with the Federal authorities as to what moneys we can raise. By the end of the calendar year the Commonwealth, under

the Financial Agreement, has to find £2,080,000. Of this sum only £1,100,000 has been received. We had £750,000 prior to the 30th June and £350,000 paid in July and August in London, leaving a gross balance of £980,000 to come. But as we are now close up to the 31st December, I have grave doubts as to whether this amount will be paid within the financial year. For the year ending 31st December, 1917, the Commonwealth also has to raise £7,450,000 for all the States, excluding New South Wales. Of this sum Western Australia should receive £1,500,000 and that is what I have chiefly based the Loan Bill and the Loan Estimates upon. To keep the works going to the 30th June next we shall require a further £1,500,000 from the Commonwealth, this amount being in addition to the sum already received since the 30th June last. In view of the State's financial position and the uncertainty in regard to future supplies, it is essential that only the most urgent and necessary works should be proceeded with. I have been obliged, therefore, to very considerably reduce the Estimates of loan expenditure submitted by the various departments, which showed something like two and a half million pounds. We had to cut them down.

Mr. Taylor: It would have been wise had you cut down your Revenue Estimates also.

The PREMIER: In that case we would have a black Wednesday. To cut down the Revenue Estimates by even a proportion of this would have meant the total salaries paid to public servants being obliterated. We have endeavoured to reduce the amounts as far as we reasonably could, and we have reduced the estimated expenditure on new works accordingly—works which, of course, the Government will be compelled to provide sooner or later. For the present we must exclude them in order to keep within our reasonable expectations. My desire is merely to place the Loan Bill before the House, together with the Estimates, so that hon. members may have full particulars of what the Appropriation Bill will be, when it is brought down, as I hope it will be before the end of this week. I move—

*That the Bill be now read a second time.*

On motion by Mr. Scaddan, debate adjourned.

## LOAN ESTIMATES, 1916-17.

### *Message.*

Message from the Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the Loan Estimates, 1916-17.

### *In Committee of Supply.*

The House resolved into Committee of Supply for the purpose of considering the Loan Estimates, Mr. Holman in the Chair.

Vote—*Departmental, £66,077:*

The PREMIER AND TREASURER (Hon. Frank Wilson—Sussex) [4.4]: In submitting the Loan Estimates, I shall not delay the Committee unduly, as I purpose leaving any detailed explanation of the items to my colleagues in the later stages. I shall briefly refer to the principal works, and leave my colleagues to give such information as may be required by hon. members when the various departments are reached. On page 2 of the Loan Estimates, which have been circulated, hon. members will notice a summary of last year's votes and expenditure, together with the estimated expenditure for the present year. The summary is drawn up in the usual style. It showed that the vote of last year amounted to £2,103,881, while the expenditure was only £1,594,643, showing a difference of £519,238. The shortage in actual expenditure as compared with the vote is explained by the fact that instructions were, necessarily, given to curtail expenditure wherever possible, owing to the difficulty of raising the necessary money. That difficulty, as I said when introducing the Loan Bill, consists of course in the impossibility, almost, of obtaining requisite supplies of material, owing to the war. The main differences, it will be noticed, are in the expenditure on railways and tramways £261,000, harbours and rivers £57,000, and water supply £186,000. The total expenditure for this year is estimated to be £1,653,413, inclusive of two small recoups to loan suspense account, as shown in the summary. I wish to draw the attention of hon. members to the fact that the increase in expenditure for this year, as compared with last year, is due mainly to Development of Agriculture; or I may say the increase is due exclusively to the larger amount to be provided for assistance to

settlers through the Industries Assistance Board, the provision made on these Loan Estimates being £350,000 as against £200,000 last year. The reason for the increase, as also for the total vote of £350,000, is as I have already outlined.

Mr. Scaddan: What about the moneys coming back from the Industries Assistance Board?

The PREMIER: The board use those also. The amount here provided is additional. Under the provisions of the Industries Assistance Act the whole of the advances made last year and in the previous year were constituted a first charge on the proceeds of the crop. That is to say, the Government were paid in priority to other creditors; and, as the board are empowered to utilise over and over again moneys repaid to them, or, in other words, to reappropriate the advances, they had money to go on with. The Industries Assistance Act Amendment Bill now before Parliament proposes to spread repayments of advances over five years, and to take one-fifth of the total advance made out of the proceeds of the coming harvest. Consequently, we have to provide additional capital to finance under the altered circumstances, which of course are in the interests of the settlers.

Mr. Scaddan: Not at all.

The PREMIER: The hon. gentleman may hold a different opinion. I should think it is of great advantage to the settlers to have the repayments spread over five years; and even a great advantage to the people with whom the settlers deal, who otherwise do not get paid, the money not being circulated.

Mr. Scaddan: That is nonsense. Those people got paid. The money, as you have admitted, is used over and over again.

The PREMIER: Hon. members will see, on pages 3 to 5, that the particulars of the different works under the various departments correspond with the totals which I have just given to the Committee. Turning to pages 6 to 29, hon. members will notice that column 1 shows the total loan authorisations. The next column shows the unexpended balances of loan authorisations, including the new Bill just introduced. Column 3 gives the estimated expenditure for the present financial year, and column 4

the estimated unexpended balance of authorisations at the end of the year as set forth. The general remarks in the last two columns, as hon. members will see, refer to the progress which the departments set down as having been made during the previous financial year, and to the progress the departments consider may be expected during the current financial year. The summary on page 31 affords a bird's-eye view of the whole position, and gives, I think, the fullest information, with the exception of a column which I used to have, but which has not been provided, showing the total expenditure required for the completion of all the works. The summary contains, however, the totals, set out in separate columns, which I previously mentioned. Column 3 shows that the unexpended balance of authorisation to the 30th June, 1916, is £2,949,173. Column 10 shows the new authorisation sought under the Loan Bill, a total of £1,485,480, plus discounts and flotation expenses £51,520. This makes a total of £4,434,653, and is to provide for the expenditure as set out in columns 4 and 5, namely, for the present financial year ending on 30th June, 1917, £1,653,413, and the estimated expenditure to carry us on for the nine months after the close of the current financial year, that is to the 31st March, 1918 as shown in column 6, amounting to £1,613,923. The total is £3,267,336. This leaves £1,167,317, the estimated unexpended balance as at the 31st March, 1918, shown in column 7. The return showing the loan expenditure during the past four months, up to the 31st October last, which I have had distributed with these Estimates, is for the information of hon. members. It will be seen that the total expenditure for those four months is nearly £300,000, or at the rate of £900,000 in round figures, per annum. Of course, I admit at once that the expenditure for the first four months of any financial year is no criterion as to the rate of expenditure during the balance of the year. It will be noticed, however, that there are several items which I have included in the Loan Estimates that have not been operated on during the past four months. For instance, the Industries Assistance Board during the four months in question



was not provided with additional capital. Then there is an amount of £114,000 provided for additional working capital for State enterprises. That is a new item entirely, and has not yet been operated on. Both these items must be added to the £900,000 in order to get an approximate idea of the estimate of expenditure for the last four months. I will now mention the principal items on these Loan Estimates demanding consideration. There is Additions and Improvements to Opened Railways £90,000, being the amount set down for expenditure during the current financial year. The expenditure on this item for the last financial year was £76,159, against the expenditure I have just mentioned for the present year, or an increase of about £13,800. The greater portion of the amount is required to meet works in hand which were not carried out in the previous year. Hon. members have the report of the Commissioner of Railways, and it deals pretty fully with these works. Then provision is made for the completion of the Bolgart extension £16,000, the Kukerin-Lake Grace line £12,000, and the Wagin-Bowelling line £35,000. The following provision has been made for works in progress. For the Esperance northwards line the sum of £5,000 has been set apart. This money is required, as has been justly pointed out, to cover the liabilities incurred to date. The continuance of the line from Norseman depends to some extent on the report of the Royal Commission which will be in the hands of Parliament, I hope, before we adjourn the session. The Wyaleatchem-Mt. Marshall line has set down for it an expenditure of £17,000, and the Wickepin-Merredin line £4,000. Of the new works proposed, on the Busselton-Margaret River area it is proposed to spend the sum of £5,000. It is to be hoped that we shall be able to make a commencement of the work of constructing the line, but I have very grave doubts on the point owing to the impossibility of getting rails and fastenings.

Mr. Angwin: Have you been able to fix up another order for rails and fastenings?

The PREMIER: I cannot say off hand. I did want to have the Margaret River railway completed as quickly as possible in con-

nection with the repatriation scheme for returned soldiers.

Mr. Angwin: And connecting the other one, which is useless now.

The PREMIER: There is a huge area of land down there which is admirably suited for closer settlement. I do hope that when we get our scheme in full operation, which I trust will be shortly, we shall be able to open up these lands by means of a railway, and have them more closely settled. The Kondinin-Merredin extension to Emu Hills has against it an estimated expenditure of £5,058. It is intended to make a commencement with the line as far as the 28-Mile. The sum of £3,000 is set down for the Nyabing-Pingrup line. We are working up to letting a contract for the line towards the end of the year, and hope to see the work started shortly. This again hinges on the question of the supply of material being available. The Minister for Works has just given me the last quotation for rails of £40 a ton at the works, but says that delivery is absolutely uncertain.

Mr. Collier: It is a waste of money to go on with railway construction under these conditions if we can avoid doing so.

The PREMIER: Undoubtedly. There is an item which we have to provide for, namely, the purchase amount of the Margaret River-Flinders Bay line, which has already been agreed upon. For this a sum of £31,958 is set down. The agreement to purchase for £31,000 was before the House last year, and the balance is required for contingencies.

Mr. Taylor: Are you making provision for that payment?

The PREMIER: Provision is made. Provision is also made for rails and fastenings under works and railways, a total expenditure of £58,000. It is doubtful whether this amount will be expended, unless we can get more favourable quotations and a more definite undertaking as to delivery. The present price is about 50 per cent. above the price paid before the war.

Mr. Angwin: It is nearly 100 per cent.

The PREMIER: About that. The coal strike in the Eastern States has also influenced the question of State requirements for our railways to a certain extent. For rolling stock the sum of £38,000 is set down.

This estimate is in excess of the expenditure for last year by £18,000. The reason for the excess is the non-provision of requirements for last year in regard to additional rolling stock, which is urgently needed at the present time. I do not know whether we shall be able to provide very much of this, but I hope we shall. We have our workshops if we can only get the under-gear. I believe there is some chance of getting material from America, namely, wheels and axles and iron work of that description. Water supply on new lines shows an estimated expenditure of £20,000, being an excess of £12,000 over last year's expenditure. This is to provide for water supply on new lines and the necessity for some new dams to meet the requirements of the Railway Department. We shall have to expend that money at any rate. For Perth tramways an amount of £42,000 is set down. This item covers £27,000 for certain commitments and there is £10,000 put down for new tram cars and other work of that description. On harbours and rivers it is estimated we shall expend £136,000 as against £100,056 last year. The principal items of expenditure are Bunbury harbour works £35,000, which is required to carry on the works now in progress and to cover certain preliminary work in connection with certain wharfage accommodation. In connection with the North-West there is an item of £1,500 to complete work in progress on the Carnarvon harbour works, and £50,000 is required in connection with the Fremantle harbour works to carry on works in course of construction. The sum of £20,000 is provided for the Geraldton harbour works improvements. It is required to complete the viaduct now in course of construction.

Mr. Heitmann: If you do not hurry up, by the time it is completed you will require to start again.

The PREMIER: There is a little item of £3,000 to give better facilities at Busselton by way of increasing the head of the jetty. The head is very short.

Mr. Scaddan: Why do you not get a port to spend this money on?

The PREMIER: It is a port. I have seen ships loading at that jetty a mile out when one could not get loading in the Bunbury harbour.

Mr. Scaddan: That port is silting up at such a rate that it is absurd to extend the jetty. Why do you not go somewhere to a port which is not silting up?

The PREMIER: It is all right. The hon. member need not excite himself. This money is well expended as the jetty is there and it cannot be carried away.

Mr. Scaddan: Everyone knows it is there. How much has the harbour silted up in the last 40 years?

The PREMIER: Not at all.

Mr. Scaddan: I am told that it has silted up 150 yards.

The PREMIER: It is developing into a magnificent port and continuous shipping goes on there even during these hard times with timber. Work has been going on there almost continuously.

Mr. Taylor: Has it not been established as a fact that it is silting up faster than the Bunbury harbour?

The PREMIER: No. There is a small item here of £20,000 to provide for a jetty at Wyndham. That commitment is in connection with the freezing works. A sum of £146,050 is provided for water supply and sewerage, being slightly under the actual expenditure of this year, but it is required to go on with works in progress and to meet the commitments of the department. There is a small item in connection with the development of the goldfields and mineral resources of the State. The estimated expenditure under this head is necessary to cover ordinary requirements in connection with the development of the mining industry. The principal item in last year's expenditure—the State smelters at Ravensthorpe, totalling £78,966—has been deleted this year because provision was made by the Mines Department to re-appropriate the proceeds from last year's sale of ore under "Government Property Sales Fund." Ample provision is made in the ordinary Estimates for that purpose. Under the heading of agriculture the sum of £652,550 is provided.

Mr. Taylor: That is a very small amount for agriculture.

The PREMIER: It is all right.

Mr. Scaddan: What is the total against agriculture under loans outstanding? What is the amount that has been actually loaned and which should be repaid to capital?

The PREMIER: Under the Industries Assistance Board?

Mr. Scaddan: In all cases.

The PREMIER: The hon. member will have to give me notice of that question. I would be glad to supply the information. Does he mean the total amount of expenditure under development of agriculture since the inception?

Mr. Scaddan: No, the total expenditure under loan for agriculture in connection with loans to farmers which will be repaid.

The PREMIER: I shall be glad to give the information. I cannot guarantee that these amounts will be repaid.

Mr. Angwin: We do not expect that.

The PREMIER: There is a sum of £652,550 under this head, the principal item being cold storage, freezing, chilling, and canning works at Wyndham. The estimated expenditure in connection with the Agricultural Bank is slightly under the actual expenditure last year. This is due to the decrease generally in the operations of the bank consequent upon the war and the necessity for curtailing the expenditure due to the financial position. The expenditure of the Agricultural Bank averaged £120,000 per annum for the first four months of this year. In connection with roads and bridges and public buildings, the estimated expenditure has been reduced considerably so as to keep it within the limits of the finances. Although £10,000 has been set down against the Fremantle road and railway bridge I doubt very much whether this money will be expended during the present financial year. Certain expenditure has been incurred in connection with the tests that were made for the new bridge, during the latter part of last year.

Mr. Scaddan: If you do not spend it there you will have to spend it on the old bridge and it is the same thing.

The PREMIER: I suppose so. The tests are not completed yet in regard to the new bridge. Certain expenditure has been incurred in connection with the tests made during the latter part of last year. The last item under the heading of "Other Undertakings" is working capital for the trading concerns.

Mr. Scaddan: What about the roads and bridges in the country and goldfields districts, £2,500?

The PREMIER: The hon. member has that. Seven thousand pounds is to be expended.

Mr. Scaddan: No, £2,500. There are liabilities already incurred amounting to £4,499.

The PREMIER: On Schedule 31 the hon. member will find that the expenditure for 1916-17 is £31,000.

Mr. Scaddan: There is only an amount of £2,500 for expenditure this year.

The PREMIER: It is the balance of authority that the Minister has to issue, that is what that means.

Mr. Taylor: You have read that into it.

The PREMIER: It is that. Under the Audit Act, Section 36, that is the balance of the authority which individual Ministers may issue.

Mr. Scaddan: That is the liability on the works which are not completed.

The PREMIER: It is the balance of the authority. If as Minister for Works I have given authority to expend £20,000 and £10,000 only has been expended, there is still £10,000 of the liability under that section of the Audit Act which has not been expended. The full £7,000 is to be expended.

Mr. Taylor: I doubt it very much.

The PREMIER: I cannot help it. At the 30th June last that money was not expended. The Ministers had merely authorised the work. The only other item necessary for me to mention at this stage is that of "Other undertakings," including a capital of £114,100 for the trading concerns. This is in order to enable the trading concerns to be carried on in accordance with the schedule of the Trading Concerns Bill now before Parliament. This is, briefly, the explanation of these Loan Estimates, and I move the first item.

*The Speaker resumed the Chair.*

Progress reported.

## ANNUAL ESTIMATES 1916-17.

### *In Committee of Supply.*

Debate resumed from the previous day on the Treasurer's financial statement and on the Annual Estimates; Mr. Holman in the Chair.

Lands and Surveys Department (Minister, Hon. H. B. Lefroy).

Vote—*Lands and Surveys, £44,587*:

The MINISTER FOR LANDS [4.35]: As it is the desire of the Committee to assist the Government in passing the Estimates this week, it is not my intention to delay the proceedings by any lengthy discourse as to the administration of the Lands Department. Indeed, possibly, I could not tell hon. members anything they do not know themselves.

Mr. Scaddan: If we said that, you would make a noise about it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Lands Department is of great importance and its ramifications extend throughout the length and breadth of the State. During the past 12 months the object of the department has been to curtail expenditure as far as possible. I have noticed that my predecessor in office was as anxious as I am to see that no unnecessary expenditure was incurred. It speaks for the economy effected when I remind hon. members that in this enormous department we propose this year to expend only £44,587. I have been able, by careful pruning, to decrease the Estimates for the current year. My predecessor was able to decrease those of last year from the amount which was voted for expenditure by Parliament.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: A very considerable reduction.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It was; indeed so much so that the Lands Department has now been cut down, I think, to bedrock. When one comes to consider that this department is bringing in something like £300,000 per annum, it is seen that the expenditure of £44,587 in administering a department of this nature is not too great. I recognise that the most important subject for us to consider is the development of the land in this State. What the State requires is population, and the only satisfactory way to get people into the country is to place them on the land. I do not believe in inducing people to come in and compete in the ordinary industrial life of the State. I think it wiser to bring in people who will settle on the land. Any Government, in introducing immigrants, should endeavour to secure only that class

which is suitable to go on the land. Of course, it is sometimes difficult to obtain such people, and I recognise that very great care has to be exercised in their selection. Still, I am firmly of the belief that the people we require are those that will make sturdy settlers in the agricultural areas. We have much to do in the way of development. During the last few years our settlers have not been very fortunate. Two years ago they were suffering from drought. Their then condition brought into existence the Industries Assistance Board, which has cost the State a great deal of expense and I believe considerable heart burning. Not only did we have a drought two years ago, but last year, when the farmers had the cup to their lips, it was dashed away by the introduction of disease into their crops. We have had since 1911 three of the worst years for the producer that I have ever known in my long experience. I fully sympathise with the late Government in the troubles and anxieties they must have experienced on that account. When, in a country like this, we get a good season, the Government are free from anxiety, but when the producers of the country begin to suffer, the Government must have a hard row to hoe. I wish to be perfectly frank and to say that I sympathise entirely with the late Government in their troubles and anxieties of the last two years. At the present time, I am happy to say, at any rate the outlook is good. We have throughout our farming districts as good an average of crops as we are ever likely to have and, moreover, owing to climatic conditions, the wheat is filling out well and we are going to have a good grain rattling through the harvesters instead of the wretched stuff we had last year. Bags this year will weigh well. We will not have three bushel bags turning the scale at 130 lbs., but instead they will go 180 and 190 lbs. That is a good outlook, and as Minister for Lands and Agriculture naturally I find it very gratifying to know that I will be relieved from anxiety on this score during the coming year. There is much we can do to assist the farmers on the land, but at the same time I believe the best assistance a man can get is that from his own hands and brain. The State should go to a certain point in assisting him, but no farther. I

am of opinion that the conditions of going on the land should be made as easy as possible and that the Government should see that the improvement conditions are properly effected. The settler should have the land as cheaply as possible, and if he carries out the improvement conditions, he is not only doing well for himself but he is a benefactor to the State. The State of Western Australia embraces a very large area, and I well know that there are many people who are inclined to deery the value of our lands. But if the good areas in Western Australia could be taken and put together, we would have a very good State in a small compass. If that were possible, instead of having to administer a great stretch of country at considerable expense, it would be possible for us to carry on the government of the country easier and probably better. My attention will be given to an endeavour to develop the South-Western portion of this State as far as possible. I realise that in the South-West we have the best country for dairying purposes and closer settlement.

Mr. Thomas: You have not made any provision for that development, have you?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have my own opinions and ideals, and one of my ideals is to see Western Australia developed, and seeing that this vast area of good land mostly belongs to the State, I consider it behoves the State to see that these lands are settled. The Government should take on the question of the development of this land in the same way as any private company would do who owned the land. I have held the opinion that if we are to properly people the lands of this State, the Government, as the owners of the land, would do well to clear portions of given areas before people are sent to settle on them.

Mr. Scaddan: That is clearing in advance of settlement.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, in advance of settlers, thereby putting people in the way of obtaining some ready money straight away.

Mr. Thomas: Why have you not some scheme prepared?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I had a scheme in my mind 20 years ago, and I regret exceedingly that nothing of the sort has

been carried out between then and now. I think, moreover, that it would be wise if people brought out from the Old Country were put to work on the land before starting on their own holdings. A man in the Old Country, even if he be a farmer there, knows nothing about the conditions in Australia. In many instances, he does not even know how to use an axe properly. He has had no training. The Government should choose country suitable for settlement, taking 10,000 or 20,000 acres, and make a start on it. Those lands could be cut up into blocks of 500 or 1,000 acres and equipped with the best machinery and the whole scheme placed under the control of a practical man, not of someone who knows nothing about the work. We would then be able to say to these immigrants, "There is the land, and as soon as you have got settled down in the country and have had time to look around, you will be able to get employment from the settlers, or if you have the means to do so, you will be able to settle on your own land." A scheme of that sort would be an excellent means of developing the undeveloped lands of this country; but it is a scheme which requires thinking out well and requires to be carried out in such a way that when the land is cleared it will not be allowed to return to its virgin state. A great drawback the settler in Western Australia has had to contend against is that in many cases he has been dumped on the land 40 or 50 miles away from communication of any sort and there has had to work out his own salvation. He has had to convey everything he wanted for use on the land over impassable tracks, and by the time that unfortunate man has got a railway within sight his heart is nearly broken. I am strongly in favour of railways going in advance of settlement.

Mr. Scaddan: You are too late.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That was always my opinion. The officers of the Government should be in a position of knowing what land is suitable for settlement and what is not. The Government should then be able to say, "There is land which we will guarantee is suitable for settlement," and a railway could be put into it. That land could then be settled much more economically than has been possible in the past, and

people would have a better chance of getting settled on the land, and of leading more prosperous and happier lives. Those are my ideas generally in regard to land settlement. We have more particularly to deal to-day with the question of the Land and Agricultural Departments estimates. Naturally, the work of the departments has not been as great as it was a few years ago. The estimates of the Lands Department have decreased by 50 per cent. during the last five or six years. The expenditure of the Lands Department a few years ago, I believe, was above £100,000 per annum.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: In 1910 it exceeded that sum.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We have now got the expenditure down to £44,000 a year. In those days when the expenditure of the Lands Department was £100,000 a year doubtless the country got value for it, and if the expenditure of the department to-day were £100,000 and we were getting value it would be a good thing for Western Australia. Still, I have faith in this country and faith in the development of the wheat area. Wherever you find prosperous farmers you find that they are men who own a few sheep. The men with sheep are driving their motor cars while the men without sheep are poor all their lives. The farmers of this State are beset by many difficulties, and I am afraid that in many instances people have been induced to go on the land in Western Australia who have not been at all suitable for the life.

Mr. Foley: You must admit that the member for Northam (Mr. Mitchell) when Minister for Lands went to the goldfields and told the people they did not want money to settle on the land with.

Mr. Scaddan: He wrote a book on how to begin without capital.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: My opinion regarding land settlement is that you want to get the man when he is young and allow him to grow up on the land. He will then be a happy man, but if you take men whose habits have been formed they will never be happy on the land, nor will they be successful farmers. Of course there are exceptions to that rule.

Mr. Scaddan: What you really want to

do is to induce young men to marry country girls instead of City girls. It is the wives who will not go into the country.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: One of the objectives of the Lands Department will naturally be the settlement of the lands in the country. We have not only our great wheat, orchard, and other agricultural areas, but we have also extensive pastoral areas in Western Australia. I hold that encouragement should be given to the settlers in the pastoral areas, and I am determined, if I remain in my present position, that the pastoralists shall be given security of tenure. That is something which I am determined shall be brought about at an early date. Every part of Western Australia must be treated alike. I notice that the late Government had taken up this matter most seriously. They recognised this question was one which had to be tackled. We all realise, however, that it will require a considerable amount of consideration. To classify the pastoral leases of this country would take years, and then could not be properly done, but though there may be difficulties in the way, that is no reason why we should not make the attempt. I shall endeavour, with the assistance of this House, to have this matter placed on a better basis in the near future. I am satisfied Parliament is desirous of seeing that these pioneer settlers of Western Australia, the men who developed this country in the first instance, shall receive every possible consideration and help. It is true some people are inclined to look on pastoralists as people continually riding about in motor-cars and with a considerable amount of money at their disposal. But most of these men have led hard lives for years, some for as many as 30 years have lived cut off from the world, away from civilisation, and if they are now in comfort and in a better position than perhaps some of their fellows, all I can say is that they deserve it. I think we owe a great deal to the pastoralists in Australia. If it were not for those pastoralists who settled the pastoral areas of Australia in the early days, Australia would never have been held for the Empire. I am confident of that. Those pioneers who went out and settled the pastoral

areas of Australia first and thereby induced others to follow have brought after them other industries, such as mining and so forth, and had that not been done Australia, I repeat, would not to-day belong to Great Britain, but to some other nation. I am sure that this House, when the matter is taken into serious consideration, will see fair play dealt out to the settlers as to everyone else in Western Australia, and that the pastoral leaseholders in Western Australia are treated with due consideration and fairness. One could enthuse on the question of settlement for hours, but it is not my intention to detain the Committee. We are anxious to get on with the Estimates and I shall be in a position to give hon. members all the information they may desire. We have every faith in this country of ours and it is the people who have to make it prosperous and not the Government. When I go through the country and see men opening it up I realise that these people are doing things. It is to them that the country owes a great deal, and it is to them also that every consideration should be given by the Government and the Parliament of the country.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford) [5.2]: I agree with the Minister for Lands that one cannot become very enthusiastic in regard to land settlement as things are in Western Australia at the present time. I appreciate the Minister's reference to the difficulties of the past two years during the drought time, and we can extend our sympathy to the farmers who have been battling through. It is true that under those circumstances the Government have a difficult task in front of them, but the settlers have an even more difficult one to face. So far as my judgment goes I do not think it is wise on the part of the State at the present time to go into the question of land settlement to any great extent. What I refer to more particularly is the employment of surveyors to go out surveying new country. We should realise that we already have sufficient country surveyed and we should devote our attention to seeing that that is settled before we think of opening up other areas. We must recognise that we have done a considerable amount of railway construction dur-

ing the past four or five years. As a matter of fact, the major portion of the loan expenditure on the part of the previous Government went in the direction of railway construction, and the financial difficulties of to-day to a considerable extent are due to the fact that these railways which were constructed at an enormous rate have not proved reproductive on account of the bad seasons which have been experienced. We have to admit, however, that whilst we constructed a considerable number of railways there are at the present time close to other railways large areas of land which are unsettled, and while they may have been selected they remain unimproved. I appeal to the Minister for Lands not to pay too much heed to the influence which is always brought to bear on the Lands Department to go out looking for new areas and survey and develop them. The Minister wants to put down his foot on that sort of thing, and he should make up his mind that during the next few years he will turn his attention to the Agricultural Bank and the Industries Assistance Board, and through these institutions give those already on the land better assistance, and endeavour to bring about the settlement of the lands which are within earling distance of existing railway lines. If he does this there will be no need to extend for the next few years the railway construction policy which has been going on for some time past. I do not want to convey the impression that I am opposed to the construction of some of the lines which are referred to in the Lands Department Estimates. There are one or two which should be constructed because in those cases settlers were promised these railways when they first took up the land. Apart from the one or two instances of that description I think we can say that so far as railway construction to assist agricultural settlement is concerned, we can rest on our oars for a few years to come. It is true that the work of the Lands Department has fallen off considerably during the past few years, but I agree that we have cut down the cost of the administration of the department to the very bone.

Mr. Angwin: You have not done anything; you have the same staff there,

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The Minister for Lands was good enough to exploit that belief to-night. The year before last the cost of administering the Lands Department was £62,000. That was cut down last year to £50,276, and the actual expenditure on administration was £45,000. The Minister is now asking for a vote of £44,000 which will work out practically the same as last year. I agree with him that there is no room for further economies in the Lands Department. The pruning knife was applied so consistently that the Under Secretary protested against the department being singled out for special attack. In regard to the question of land settlement and the need to devote one's attention to the settlement of the lands along existing railways, I would like the Minister to go into the question and see whether a number of reserves alongside existing railways cannot be thrown open for selection. We have had a system in the past that whenever it was anticipated that a railway would be constructed the Lands Department reserved a number of 1,000-acre blocks in the expectation of those blocks being required. After the construction of the line, however, when it was found that those blocks were not required, they still remained reserved. I can speak with some experience of the Bruce Rock district, and I know that there are many 1,000-acre blocks which are still reserved. The railways are finished and the land cannot be required for railway purposes. It certainly is not required for travelling stock because we have the ordinary reserves on which water supplies are provided. Therefore, those blocks might be made available for settlement speedily so that we might get more revenue for the railways already constructed. I would also like to draw the Minister's special attention to the repurchased estates. I am not asking the Minister to do things that were neglected by myself while I was Minister for Lands because certain progress has been made. The Minister should try and continue that with a view of getting those estates used for the purposes for which they were repurchased. The Avondale estate is one which has been held by the State for a number of years. That estate is suitable for closer settlement,

but there is no doubt about the fact that it has been overcapitalised. By holding the estate we stop the progress of the district where it is situated, and at the same time we are paying interest on the purchase money. It is of no use calculating that within a reasonable time land values will so increase as to make this a commercial proposition at the price which is now being asked. I suggest that a considerable portion of the capital cost be written off. The whole of that estate, however, is not a white elephant. A portion of it is being farmed by Mr. Robinson of the Lands Department on behalf of the State, but we are not getting that return from the estate which we would get if it were settled by five or six different farmers, and if the land were not over capitalised.

Mr. Butcher: Is it not true that your own operations have paid interest on the money expended during the time you have had it?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I believe it did pay interest but only on the portions cultivated. I am prepared to admit that Mr. Robinson has had fairly good returns from the estate but we are not getting for Western Australia the return which should come from the whole of the property.

Mr. Butcher: It is too heavily capitalised.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The only way to get the estate used for the purpose for which it was purchased is by writing off some of the capital cost.

Mr. Harrison: Did you ever consider that estate from the point of view of dairying?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Not so far as I know. There are other estates in the Geraldton district to which the question of over capitalisation also applies, but I understand that a Bill is being introduced to deal with those, and when it is introduced the Minister will outline the Government's policy. We cannot get away from the fact that the repurchased estates should be more closely settled than is the case to-day. The Yandanooka estate was purchased and was made available at a reasonable price. That can be selected at the price originally fixed and farmers could make a success there, but unfortunately after the estate was repurchased we struck bad seasons and then there followed the war with the result that we



have not had the applications for land which we expected to receive. Nevertheless, we should make every effort to secure settlers for that estate so that farming methods different from those employed there at the present time might be carried on. Like Mr. Robinson at Avondale Mr. Lee Steere, the manager at Yandanooia has been working that estate very successfully. I desire to emphasise again the necessity for diverting attention from the extension of land settlement towards assistance in the development of the land which is already settled. During the past few years the farmers have had unfortunate experiences, and in some districts they have lived under almost impossible conditions. If only we stop land settlement, we shall be able to devote money to the farmers now engaged in developing the agricultural industry, more especially in the wheat belt; and so we shall, at the same time, relieve the State, inasmuch as the money invested through the Agricultural Bank and the Industries Assistance Board will be recouped. There is approximately six million pounds invested by the State in the agricultural industry of Western Australia, and if we extend settlement to new areas we shall have to increase that investment. On the other hand, if we confine our attention to the area in which the six millions are already invested we shall at the same time assist the State's finances and render more happy and prosperous the farmers who have been battling to develop the industry during the last few years.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [5.17]: I am pleased to have heard the sympathetic remarks which have greeted the introduction of this vote. The member for Guildford, as Minister for Lands, had a strenuous time during the past two years: and I am pleased to say that the agriculturalists who really understand the position appreciate the fact that the hon. gentleman's efforts made through the Industries Assistance Board have borne fruit. Had it not been for the assistance given at that time, Western Australia would be in a very different position to-day. Unfortunately, the farmer has been the last to derive any benefit from the wealth which the farming industry has created. By that wealth the Railway Department, the storekeepers, and the

merchants are fructified at the expense of the farmer, to whom no more is left than will suffice to keep the asset alive. With the crop now coming in, the farmer will not be able to do more than he has done in the past—the farmer's liability will not be reduced by a single penny, so far as I see. Especially in the Eastern wheat belt, the difficulties of the farmer are extremely severe. I agree that we should concentrate our energies on the land settlement that already exists in this State. People who have been settled on land for eight or nine years must have railway facilities. I know of settlers around Tammin and Baandee who have had to cart their wheat over distances ranging from 15 to 22 miles. Farming cannot continue under such conditions. Quite a number of our farmers have enlisted on account of the difficulties under which they were labouring, enlisted because they could see no headway before them. They have done remarkably well at the Front, and we all admire them for enlisting; but the assets which are lost to the individual will also become lost to the State. Unless maintained in good condition, they become a drag on the Agricultural Bank and a drag on the Industries Assistance Board. I was, therefore, extremely pleased to hear the announcement of the Minister for Lands. A man going on the land should put all his money into improvements. The first money of the farmer should go to improve his farm, and should not come back to the State in the form of rent.

Mr. HEITMANN (Geraldton) [5.24]: It is pleasing to note that for once an ex-Minister controlling the Lands Department, and the Minister for Lands for the time being, are on good terms and seemingly agreed as to the policy to be adopted. For my part I am convinced that, in order to bring the farming industry to the position which it should occupy in this State, a different policy must be followed. Some few years ago, in the boom days, the policy was to invite all and sundry to go on the land, irrespective of whether they were temperamentally suitable for the occupation of farming and irrespective of whether they had capital or not. Again, it seems to me a stupid policy to place a man on the land and then ask him, in his first year, to con-

tribute towards the revenue by payment of rent. It would be a wise policy to defer payment of rents for a certain number of years. My opinion is that, as time goes on, the farmers now struggling here will be in a very good position. The State desires to arrive at the position of receiving the full value of the land sold, and if that end can be more readily achieved by a change of policy let us take that course. It is frequently disastrous for a man to have to struggle at work off his farm for a month or two of every year in order to get the money to pay land rents. The greatest trouble of all is that in days gone by land rents were paid into the general revenue. That practice obtains even to-day. The result is that land revenue was regarded as recurrent, and the idea of keeping land revenue separate from the general revenue was never entertained. Mr. Bath, years ago, preached that land rents should be placed in a special account. In the past, not merely have men without money been placed on the land, but they have been settled in many districts so far remote from the railway facilities that success was almost impossible. Again, men were settled in districts where there was great doubt as to the rainfall. It is now established that in several stretches of this country the calling of the farmer must be highly precarious even in the best of times. I agree with the member for Bunbury (Mr. Thomas) that, when this State is fully developed, the large part of the population will be settled in the South-West. It can easily be calculated what population our wheat areas will carry—one family on 1,000 acres, at best. The great South-West, however, will in time carry a dense population. Unfortunately, owing to the large expenditure on railway and other developments, there have been no funds available for the costly work of clearing land in the South-Western district. For a number of years it seemed that wheat growing was to be Western Australia's one hope. For one thing, the returns from wheat growing are so quick. If, however, a proportion of the money which has been devoted to the development of the wheat industry had been spent in clearing heavy timbered country in the South-West, would not the returns have been just as quick? I am glad to learn that, for the first time in the history

of Denmark, the settlers have a few shillings in their pockets. One of the leading settlers there, Mr. Redmond, expresses himself to that effect.

Mr. Munsie: He got that money by working at the Naval Base.

Mr. HEITMANN: That is not so. The dairying industry has gone ahead at Denmark. I am convinced that, unless we develop a system of mixed farming on good lines what we call farming now, which is to say wheat growing, must always prove a highly precarious means of existence. For the wheat grower to lose all his crop it needs but that one out of perhaps ten factors should go against him. Too much rain, or a dry spell, or rust, may destroy the whole year's work; and the store bill remains to be paid from future crops.

Mr. Underwood: I suffered similarly on a mine, and I got no redress.

Mr. HEITMANN: I remember when Victoria was going through the same stage as Western Australian wheat growers are going through to-day, and when it was only the introduction of creameries and the development of the pig raising industry that enabled those people to pull through, together with the facilities started in the various small towns for the marketing of their produce. One thing that is missing in this country is organisation amongst the people in the towns to assist those in out-back districts in getting rid of their produce. I remember going amongst the farmers about 100 miles north of Melbourne, where they had a half-selection of 320 acres and had to cut it out of the forest. But it was not many years before those people were growing wheat successfully, and at the end of the year, if the season was good, instead of having a grocer's bill to pay, they had a credit balance in their favour with the grocer for goods and dairy produce which they had sent in. There is great waste going on in this country from year to year. I took a trip with Mr. Connor in the Victoria district not very long ago during a good season, and for miles I saw native grasses from two to three feet in height which were not being used at all. The same thing exists amongst most of our farmers. All the land is good, but there is no stock, no sheep, cattle, or pigs, and when the summer weather comes

on this grass is blown away. I want to see the dairying and the pig raising industries developed in the district, together with other parts of the State. It is ideal dairying country, inasmuch as there is very little heavily timbered land and there is good grass and water over the greater portion of it, and during the winter months it is heavy growing land. If we could encourage farmers to make use of this grass to see them through the long dry season, instead of farmers having a grocer's bill at the end of the year, they would be in a position of having a credit balance due to them by means of the produce which they could supply.

Mr. Foley: How did they assist farmers in Victoria? They gave them none.

Mr. HEITMANN: Our forefathers used a wooden plough, but that is no reason why we should do so. There does not seem to be the same industry or application amongst the present generation as there was amongst the pioneers of the country. We have to face the position as we find it.

Mr. Foley: Because these people are ignorant to-day, you think all other industries should be taxed in order to give the money to them and that they may store up a bit of grass.

Mr. HEITMANN: The hon. member is entirely wrong.

Mr. Foley: Your logic is bad.

Mr. HEITMANN: The hon. member is entirely wrong when he talks about indolence on the part of the farmers. I have seen miners working and farmers working, and if there is one job I would take in preference, it would be mining as against the job of a farmer. I would rather be a miner than be starving as some of our cockies are starving to-day on their holdings. We have talked about the brave and bold pioneer who goes out prospecting, but he generally has a lot of tucker with him. I have seen farmers living on the poorest of food, and their youngsters looking half-starved and not getting enough of that class of food which is most suitable for them. It is idle to say that the life of the farmer is a bed of roses. It is useless to apply to the farmer the term of indolence. We have developed our lands through our system of assisting farmers and given assistance to people who perhaps ought not to have had that assistance. I ad-

mit that we have developed some of the worst features of farming.

Mr. Underwood: We have developed a class of mendicant friars.

Mr. HEITMANN: They are only average man and woman after all.

Mr. Underwood: If you weigh out charity as you weigh it out now you will get that always.

Mr. HEITMANN: The hon. member did not adopt that attitude when he weighed out charity not long ago in Perth. I can see the time when Western Australia is going to be the finest agricultural country in Australia. If it is not, we may as well pull down the flag and say that Western Australia is never going to be a country.

Mr. Taylor: We will never make it that by talking about it.

Mr. HEITMANN: We have not talked about it, but we have assisted the farmers and assisted them as I believe no other country in the world has done.

Mr. Foley: We have not discriminated in our assistance.

Mr. HEITMANN: It is not always possible to discriminate.

Mr. Willmott: You got 18 million bushels out of that assistance.

Mr. HEITMANN: The complaint indicated by the interjection is that we have not discriminated and have given too generously to the farming people.

Mr. Foley: So we have.

Mr. Taylor: Yes, and no one knows that better than the hon. member.

Mr. Underwood: We have given not wisely, but too well.

Mr. HEITMANN: The member for Mt. Margaret must recognise that in the early days the goldfields had nothing to complain of.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: Money was squandered.

Mr. Taylor: That made it possible for you people to squander your money to-day on agriculture.

Mr. HEITMANN: Is the hon. member always going to take the credit for this.

Mr. Taylor: Not personally.

Mr. HEITMANN: Many of the farmers to-day were first of all on the goldfields where they made their money which they

have put into the land. The idea is to develop each and all of the industries together.

Mr. Underwood: Put up an argument and we will listen to you.

Mr. HEITMANN: The only argument which the hon. member can put up is that the land is no good and that it is a failure. If we accept that argument then there is no future before Western Australia.

Mr. Underwood: I say that the system we have been working on is a failure.

Mr. HEITMANN: I am prepared to listen to that. If we place men on the land without capital then the only thing we can do is to assist them to develop the land. The present Minister for Mines is looking for something on which to spend money on the goldfields.

Mr. Taylor: He has put £5,000 on the Loan Estimates to do that.

Mr. HEITMANN: If the hon. member will look at the Loan Estimates he will see that he is not entirely right. We have been told more than once that during the last five years, when the member for Boulder was occupying the position of Minister for Mines, he endeavoured in every possible direction to assist the mining industry, and I believe he did. There has never been a genuine case put before the member for Boulder, when Minister for Mines, which was turned down.

Mr. Collier: We must remember that our agricultural development is in its initial stages, and that it always entails a large expenditure of money in these circumstances.

Mr. HEITMANN: I can see no reason why we should pit one industry against the other. I want to see the best return from the land that is possible and not any half-hearted, unsympathetic style of farming.

Mr. Underwood: We have been half-hearted in our assistance, have we?

Mr. HEITMANN: The hon. member was a member of the Cabinet which granted this assistance and a member of the Government as well. During the time he was a member of that Government a record was put up. I notice in the Loan Bill, Schedule 6, a sum of money which in my opinion is going to be spent on other than developmental work. A sum of £50,000 is provided for an overhead bridge.

Mr. Collier: That is getting right in on the Attorney General's bridge.

Mr. HEITMANN: I would rather see that money spent in one or two of our industries in order to provide a greater return for the money.

Mr. Taylor: This is a political industry.

Mr. Collier: It is better to make roads and railways with our money.

Mr. HEITMANN: It is remarkable that the very people who have gone on the platform scores of times and told the farmers that there was no country in the world and no Government in the world which has ever given this assistance to the farmers, and taken credit for that, are now complaining because that assistance has been given. I admit that possibly a lot of money has been wasted and that assistance has been given which has not been justified. But we have farmers who have required assistance rightly, and from the point of view of the future development of the country, we are justified in giving it; indeed, it would have been unbusinesslike if we had allowed the farmer to go off his holding for want of a little assistance. The Government should strike out as soon as they can in the direction of instituting a system of mixed farming.

Mr. THOMAS (Bunbury) [5.45]: I would like to compliment the last speaker on the sound commonsense utterances he has expressed. It is cheering to find that some hon. members are beginning to realise that the genuine development of Western Australia is essential if we are to make the progress expected. At various times I have made ineffectual protests on behalf of the South-West, and I expect I shall continue to make them. I was sadly disappointed in the speech made by the Minister for Lands. Year after year I have expected from each successive Minister that he would at least do better than his predecessor, but it seems as if hope springs eternally in my breast but all the time I am doomed to disappointment. The Minister was vague and nebulous in his theories. There was nothing concrete whatever. I regret to say that for the development of agriculture in the South-West this year, as in most other years, nothing whatever has been provided. It makes one tired. While it seems possible to place on the Loan

Estimates the sum of £50,000 for an overhead bridge in the City, there is not £10,000 for the legitimate development of the fairest province in the State. Why do we not learn something from what other places are doing, Canada within the last year or two has multiplied by 100 per cent. her agricultural possibilities.

Mr. Taylor: How is he to-day?

Mr. THOMAS: She is far ahead. She has converted her 20 millions of imports over exports into 20 millions of exports over imports, making a difference of 40 millions. We are taking no steps whatever to reap the rich harvest possibilities which lie in the South-West portion of the State. I am not going to cavil at most of what has been done for the farmers in the eastern districts, but while I agree that some wrongs may have been done in the wheat areas, that some blunders have been made, I hold that we should benefit by our knowledge in our future actions. What I strongly and emphatically object to is that year after year nothing whatever is done for the portion of the State which, in the opinion of thousands would give the best and surest return for the investment.

Mr. Collier: We did something in the way of irrigation.

Mr. THOMAS: Yes, and when the hon. member came to Harvey to declare the scheme open he talked fluently and well of the wonderful natural resources of the district. The latent possibilities of the South-West are infinite. It has been reiterated so often that all must know that until the last year or two we have been sending away a million pounds per annum for dairy produce; yet save for the irrigation scheme carried out by the member for Boulder, I cannot point to a single development work done for the assistance of the South-West.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: Then you do not know much about it.

Mr. THOMAS: Perhaps the hon. member is right. Yet in one week last month the Bunbury butter factory turned out 7,224 lbs. of butter, approximately three and a half tons. Look at the enormous demand for that product, and see what we have done unaided. If some definite scheme of development were to be initiated instead of vague nebulous theories, if the development

of that part of the State was seriously taken in hand, the time would not be far distant when Western Australia, with its bacon and butter and eggs, could supply the million pounds worth of dairy produce a year which its people consume. Yet what do we do? Absolutely nothing. It is simply a voice crying in the wilderness.

Mr. Harrison: We will have to put you in the Cabinet.

Mr. THOMAS: It is a peculiar thing that the South-West never gets the representation it deserves.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): Why, you have had two Premiers.

Mr. THOMAS: Well, what did they do?

Mr. O'Loghlen: A lot of public money has been expended during the last four years in the South-West.

Mr. THOMAS: In agricultural development?

Mr. O'Loghlen: No, but in other development.

Mr. THOMAS: It is true we have had £30,000 provided for the Bunbury harbour.

Mr. O'Loghlen: And a quarter of a million of money for sawmills.

Mr. THOMAS: But it is agricultural development that I would insist upon. I assert, and it cannot be honestly denied, that in that fair province lie the greatest possibilities of the State. In what other part of the State could we hope for the successful settlement of large numbers of people? Millions can be provided for the operations of the Industries Assistance Board in other parts of the State, but where the best return is assured Government after Government sit back year after year until one grows sick and tired of these ineffectual protests against a wrong done. Times out of number have I suggested a scheme of development in the House. That scheme is all right and has the endorsement of the Minister for Works. Men who have gone into the matter say that in that scheme lie great possibilities. I have gone down on my knees and asked for so paltry a sum as £10,000 to initiate the scheme, but I cannot get a bob; yet £50,000 is provided for a bridge in Perth. And we talk about what we are going to do to make the country productive and help the Empire! I do not know what to do.

Mr. Foley: Put the Government out.

Mr. THOMAS: And the Minister gets up and makes a few agreeably suave remarks and says it will receive attention in the future. In the Government butter factory started at Busselton recently they are turning out something like two tons of butter per month.

The Minister for Lands: Per week.

Mr. THOMAS: I hope the Minister is right; I think it is per month.

The Minister for Lands: That surely is an argument that something has been done for the South-West.

Mr. THOMAS: Talk about the mountain labouring and bringing forth a mouse! On the score of a butter factory the Minister wishes to claim something done for the South-West. After all these years the Government have started a butter factory in Busselton. If, in the crude and ineffectual fashion in which we have been operating up to the present, that can be done, what could be done under proper conditions of Government assistance and the application of science to our industries! Down in that district we have settlements where men are making magnificent livings for themselves, their wives and families on 50 acres and 60 acres of land. I have pleaded with the House to give me any small sum whatever to start a system of ready made farms which settlers could develop rent free for the first five years. If at the end of that time the amount were capitalised and the settler given 30 years in which to pay for land, we could year after year settle in the South-West any number of farmers who would ultimately be happy and prosperous and bring into the State the only factor upon which sure and certain prosperity can be built. What better prospects could there be for our land than colonies of people on small holdings? Under what other conditions can the Government and the guiding hand of the departmental expert better direct them? There is there a province with a certain rainfall, an area bigger than Victoria, where no drought has ever been known. We have there potato lands whose productivity, acre for acre, beats that of Victoria by 30 per cent.

Mr. Foley: Oh! bunkum.

Mr. THOMAS: The records prove it. We have heard a good deal about the building of railways, and I agree that the time has arrived when we might call a halt, though I do not say that there are not a few more lines which should be constructed. In the south-western division we have any amount of land fit for settlement, some of the very best and close to railways. I know of such land in my own constituency within a short distance of railways and a short distance of a port; and beyond my constituency there is even better land in the district represented by my friend, the member for Nelson (Mr. Willmott), plenty of it, waiting to be developed on which a very large number of permanent settlers could be located.

Mr. Willmott: Thousands of acres.

Mr. THOMAS: Yes, thousands of acres of beautiful land only needing some Government assistance, some concrete scheme evolved by the Government to give it a start, and it would be a success. There is one thing I consider needful in Western Australia and that is agricultural training. We have at Brunswick a very fine State farm in which many excellent examples have been given of intense culture. I am bound to say that the people do not always appreciate this as they should; they spend part of their time finding fault with the unfortunate individual who is in charge of it. In the past it has been the practice to place people on the land irrespective of whether or not they were suitable for the life. I am satisfied that most of the failures of the past are due to the fact that men not fitted in any sense at all to be a success at farm work have been encouraged, and even forced by seductive arguments, to take up farm land. If we had spent a small portion of the millions we have spent in ineffectual attempts at permanent settlement in turning out highly educated agriculturists, who would bring to bear not the stage-coach period of agricultural knowledge but highly trained knowledge—if some of those millions had been spent in that direction, Western Australia would be more prosperous than it is to-day.

Mr. Collier: Is there not a chance that you might educate them beyond their occupation?

Mr. THOMAS: Can you educate a man too highly for the occupation he is to follow? The hon. member seems to think that the only thing necessary for the farmer is that he shall have a weak head and a strong back, that he shall be a human cab-horse who is prepared to work all hours that no other human being will work, that he must be brawn and muscle and nothing else. In my opinion it is not the hard toil alone that is going to make for the farmer's success, but the amount of knowledge and science which a man applies to his work. One cannot make a successful business man in five minutes, cannot make a man a success in any commercial enterprise without training, one cannot put a man into any professional occupation without proper training for the purpose. But what is done with the farmer? Some clerk from an office is sent out to settle on the land—too many of this class have been placed on the land—and it is expected that he will make a success of farming.

Mr. Willmott: The wonder is that so many of them do make a success of things in the circumstances.

Mr. THOMAS: The hon. member is quite right. It is wonderful that so many of them make a success of it. The fault does not lie in the land, as suggested by the member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood), but in the methods adopted. The way we send people to settle on the land is what causes all the trouble. Had we adopted more scientific methods, the country would have been put to less expenditure and farming in Western Australia would have been a greater success than it has been up to the present time. We should provide a number of agricultural colleges and get the best professors of agriculture that money can buy. I am not one of those who believe that because we pay a man £700 or £800 a year that we are paying him an enormous salary. If we can teach the young men growing up on the farm to-day to work their holdings on scientific lines and it costs us £5,000 a year to do so I consider it would be dirt cheap. High scientific attainments were never yet obtained at a miserable salary.

The Minister for Works: Do you not think that a good farmer, a practical man, would do as much good?

Mr. THOMAS: Yes, a good practical man, provided he had scientific training as well.

Member: Some of the best farmers in Western Australia are not scientific men.

Mr. THOMAS: If they have been successful without having that thorough knowledge of the industry, how much greater would their success be if they had complete scientific knowledge?

Mr. O'Loughlen: How many farmers in the South-West have applied for scientific instruction?

Mr. THOMAS: What opportunity have they had?

Mr. Foley: What about the State farms?

Mr. THOMAS: Mr. Chairman, I would remind the hon. members sitting behind me that each of them may make a speech after I have finished and thus let the House have the benefit of their knowledge of this question.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. THOMAS: We frequently hear the party which represents the farmers in this House claiming that the man on the land is the backbone of the country. The farming industry is the basis upon which all the prosperity of Western Australia must be built up; it is a scientific fact that out of the land must come the prosperity of the country. One cannot develop a single acre of land, or produce one bushel of wheat without increasing the wealth of the country. We look to science to develop our medical men and to develop every other important calling in Western Australia, but anything appears to be good enough for the farming industry. If the farming industry is the basis of all prosperity, the one thing from which natural wealth must spring, we should turn our attention to the development of that industry to the highest scientific point humanly possible, no matter what it may cost in salaries. If we suffer to-day we will reap the fruits of such a policy in a few years. We would then get closer settlement, and countless thousands of settlers are required all over Australia if this country is to remain one of the outposts of the white race as it should be, and if we are to populate our country as we should do. If we are to do this, the settlement of the land consti-

tutes one of the gravest problems facing Australian politicians to-day—and we have not given to its consideration one fraction of the time or thought we should. It is time Australia woke up and gave a little thought to the agricultural industry. We have had sufficient of the sort of administration in Western Australia that we have to date. It is time that somebody interested himself in seeing that something was done to improve matters. Let us look at what Canada has done and look at what a self-supporting country Australia could be, and how we might turn our present excess of imports into excess of exports from Western Australia, if only we properly develop the agricultural industry. Perhaps I have been rather heated on this question. I feel so sure of the ground I have taken and that I have so much justice on my side, I would like to go farther even and force this House—

Mr. Willmott: You have been very moderate.

Mr. THOMAS: Realising all the circumstances, realising what this question means to Western Australia, I believe I may claim to have been moderate in the extreme. I trust that the House will realise the position of the agricultural industry in Western Australia and will realise that the time has arrived when we should give some attention to the great south-west province and see that it is settled by a successful and prosperous people.

Mr. GRIFFITHS (York) [6.11]: As a representative of an important constituency in the agricultural areas, it will be expected that I shall say something on this vote. The member for Pilbara said last evening, referring to the appointment of the Royal Commission on the agricultural industry, that he thought the Commission was not warranted, that the experts of the department could arrive at the root of the difficulties so far as the farming industry is concerned. I have no doubt that the experts could assist the commission with their expert knowledge, but if it is desired to ascertain the true conditions, to arrive at the crux of the difficulties, at the root of the trouble, one must get out amongst the people and amongst practical men.

Mr. Collier: The member for Bunbury has told us that scientific knowledge was all that was required.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I agree with what the member for Bunbury has said with regard to the necessity for scientific knowledge. One of the witnesses at Kellerberrin, Mr. Stewart Paterson, stated as his opinion that what was required was an increase of the productivity of the soil, that that would be the salvation of the farming industry. I do not hold with that view entirely. There are other ways in which we can improve the farming industry and the principal one is to reduce the cost of production and of handling, freight charges, water rates, etc., and make it possible for the farmer to compete in the production of wheat with countries employing black labour. Let us consider what the farmers have got from the wheat board—1s. 6d. with 6d. to follow on delivery, 6d. in March next, and 6d. in September, bringing the total to 2s. 6d. Yet it has been proved beyond all doubt that it costs 3s. 4d. a bushel to finance the proposition.

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

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I want to refer to the good work which we might expect to result from the investigations which are being carried on by commissions, and while on that subject I would point out that in Canada in 1910 attention was drawn to the disabilities under which the farmers were labouring, and delegates from 800 different centres approached the Canadian Government in a body. The outcome was that a commission was appointed, and that commission investigated many matters of immense benefit to the farmers and the investigations resulted in a considerable gain to the industry. Canada is doing wonderful things to-day and in 1915 produced 200 million pounds worth of agricultural produce. The success of agriculture there has been largely due to the work of the commission and I am looking forward to beneficial results following the appointment in this State of the Agricultural Commission, which is now carrying on its investigations. The other evening I referred to the fact that there was a great drift of population towards the cities and the member for Boul-



der (Mr. Collier) remarked with some feeling that I was touching upon one of Australia's great problems. In Victoria we find that 48 per cent. of the population is in Melbourne, while in this State 35 per cent. of the people is in the capital city. This state of affairs does not exist in the older countries of the world. Take London, for instance. There we find that the population is only 12 per cent. of the total of England. In Berlin it was something under 6 per cent. of the total. The contrasts between the old countries and the cities of Australia is very marked. Something has brought about that drift towards the cities and it is time we tried to stop it. I claim that the commission, which is composed of men of practical experience, will be able to formulate some scheme which will have the effect of remedying that state of affairs. The lack of school facilities has been referred to as being responsible to some extent for this drift to the cities, although we have to admit that in this State much has been done by the Education Department. The fact remains, however, that many farmers will tell us that the great difficulty is that they cannot give their children in the country the education they would like them to receive. We have heard references to breezy optimism, and the fact that that has taken people out to the back blocks and that they were then told that nothing but a strong arm was required in order to make a success of farming, and that if they had a strong arm and a stout heart, the Agricultural Bank would do the rest. Professor Lowrie some time back drew attention to the fact that it would require £300 of reserve capital to start farming with; but how many have gone on the land without resources. I have known many who have done so and they have gone under in the process. The result of that advice is that at the present time we have 600 farms on the hands of the Agricultural Bank. Mr. Patterson, of Kellerberrin, has engaged in farming with considerable success, but he was financially able to adopt methods which could not be followed by the average man on the land. For instance, if in harvest time a thunderstorm came along he would be able to go to a contractor and arrange with him to go

on at a low price and break up the surface and in that way conserve the moisture in the soil, but it is not every one who can follow on those lines. One requires capital to do many things on a farm. The farmers at the present time are realising that it is impossible to farm successfully without stock. Stock of all kinds is a necessary adjunct to a farm. We should always bear in mind the amount of money which we send to the Eastern States for dairy produce. This should not be so, because the conditions in Western Australia are entirely favourable to mixed farming. The pig is an important factor on a farm, and while on this subject I cannot but compliment the *Sunday Times* on its establishment of a pig club. I have no desire to give that newspaper a cheap advertisement, but considerable good must follow from the establishment of such an institution. Clubs of that description are well known in America, and they do a vast amount of good. At Merredin there is a scheme on foot to establish a co-operative flour mill. There will be a certain amount of offal in the district and a large amount of phosphatic acid will be retained in the State. The member for Geraldton (Mr. Heitmann) made some reference to mixed farming and what can be done in the way of obtaining stock. A farmer at Mt. Stirling, who is a canny Scot and makes every post a winner, told me in this old Chamber only a few nights ago, that he had received a good cheque for some fattened stock which he had sold from his property. That is a matter which should engage the attention of all thrifty farmers. Stock will live on the waste products of the farm and they also help to keep back the crop, and in the case of my friend he told me that he did not give his stock a grain of wheat; they just fattened on the waste products and at the same time helped to fertilise the soil. A good deal has been said about butter, in regard to the manufacture of which there is plenty of scope in this State. In Victoria the butter industry was built up on a depression. The Euroa district there, which has the apparently generous rainfall of 27 inches, but which all falls within five or six months, is regarded as one of the best dairying districts in that State. Yet the stock there have to be hand fed for a considerable

portion of the year. In the wheat areas of Western Australia for six or seven months we have a rainfall which is sufficient to provide feed for the dairy cattle, and compared to Euroa, the districts of Western Australia are certainly as good. It is pleasing, however, to realise that farmers are at last moving in the direction of acquiring stock. Everywhere we go if the farmers have not stock already, we hear of their desire to secure some. Now, as against what I said in regard to increased production from the land, it has to be remembered that before an ideal position can be attained for the farmer his costs must be considerably reduced. Handling, transport charges, water rates, and so forth must be reduced. Again, telephone facilities should be made available to the farmer. Hon. members who are not acquainted with the country districts can have no idea what an assistance the telephone is to the farmer. In Canada, so soon as a man gets on a farm, he is absolutely besieged by the agents of telephone companies. A good deal has been said about co-operative effort—one of the things which the farmer is notoriously slow to learn. He is, however, gradually coming to realise that his salvation largely lies in the direction of co-operation. I know of a little co-operative company which was started by farmers and which to-day has four branches. Ten or eleven co-operative societies of farmers are starting now to handle their wheat co-operatively. In view of the present prospects of returns from the wheat crop, farmers must look about to make savings.

Mr. Scaddan: The farmer is benefiting by leaving that man stranded who helped him through his trouble.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: That is not so. At one time I was agent for a co-operative society, and in all cases where I found a farmer under any obligation to a store-keeper, I never pressed the business of the co-operative society until the farmer had discharged his obligation or felt himself justified in making a change.

Mr. Scaddan: Is not your society practically restricting its business to clients of the Industries Assistance Board, who are able to pay cash? Do you take any risk at all?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The letter I am now about to read will give hon. members some

idea of the feeling which prevails among farmers—

I thank you for your information re Royal Commission's visit to Shackleton, and I shall have my information ready, but I am out of heart with the business altogether. I, as an old goldfielder, would like to have some of my old goldfields friends on the land for a bit and let them battle with excessive railway freights, high taxes for water—£47 February, £47 now due—taxes for roads that are never made, land taxes, handling grain in bags, increased cost of fertilisers, high agency charges. Just let me instance our railway freight—1s. bag, handling charges 9d. bag, cost of bag 10d. or more, total 2s. 7d. per bag right away. Some of our old friends who talk so glibly about our lives of luxury, would alter their tune.

Mr. Scaddan: What remedy does your correspondent suggest? That you should always be tackling the Government instead of the man who robs you?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I quite agree that a certain measure of self-reliance should be inculcated. There are a number of men who take up the position of what I can only call spongers, who simply rely on the Government, and who bring discredit and odium on a highly respectable body of men. I wish to call attention also to the position of the fruit industry. Recently I said that during the last twenty years practically nothing has been done in regard to cool storage in Western Australia. I know there is cool storage at Albany, but I cannot help thinking that in view of the Albany climate the installation of cold storage was ill-judged. That struck me when I saw the works at Albany, though of course there may have been something more at the back of the proposal. We know that a certain amount has been done to aid small mine owners and prospectors by the erection of State batteries. That aid was perfectly justifiable, and has been justified by results. I hold that every primary industry should be encouraged. But what would the small mine owner and the prospector have said if the Government had put up one single battery and left it at that for 20 years? That is practically what has

been done in regard to the provision of cool storage for the fruit industry. Again, cartage of fruit from the railway station to the sale rooms amounts to about £7,000 a year. It is an absolute waste of money. I hope that when funds are available the Minister for Railways will bear in mind my suggestion that railway sidings into the markets are urgently required by the fruit industry, which represents an invested capital of two millions sterling. The siding, I estimate, will cost approximately £2,000. The proposed expenditure of £30,000 to £40,000 on market accommodation could then stand over. According to the report of the Taxation Commissioner for the year 1913-14, 252 mine owners paid in income tax £5,750, while 211 contributors paid £5,307. The same report states that 975 farmers paid £2,198, while 710 orchardists paid £2,115. The land revenue for the past four years runs into £1,300,000, while the cost of agricultural railways constructed during the same period is only £1,700,000. Until the recent dry season agricultural railways throughout the system have always paid working expenses, interest and sinking fund. This fact shows how largely dependent the successful working of the railway system has been upon the success of the man on the land. Two years ago the charges of the State batteries were reduced; but no special tax was put on the prospector to meet the expenditure consequent on the appointment of additional inspectors. I do not object to that, but I wish to point out that the orchardist was called on to pay a special tax for the eradication of orchard pests. The encouragement given to the fruit industry was that the income tax of orchardists was doubled. In conclusion, I have just one growl to make. It is contained in the following letter—

As our member and a farmers's representative in the Assembly, I am writing to you pointing out a glaring restraint of trade which is being carried on to the detriment of the farmers concerned. J. Ringland, Belka, ordered a Sunshine; State Implement sent Willy Willy. E. A. Butcher, Bruce Rock, wanted a harvester; he got a hint: "Useless to order anything but State." E.

Suffolk ordered a Sunshine; was granted a secondhand State. W. Aylott, Shackleton, took over De Moles' farm; Sunshine was booked up and recommended; order turned down and a State machine sent out.

Mr. Seaddan: From whom is that letter?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: From Mr. MacDonald of Quairading.

Mr. Seaddan: Why should the general taxpayer provide money to send to Victoria for machinery when the machinery can be provided here?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I object to the compulsion. The man is helpless because the Government have his wheat. The principle of the thing is wrong.

Mr. Seaddan: On the same basis, if people wanted to go to Germany for a thing they ought to get it there.

Mr. Angwin: The State has the best article in the market to-day.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: In regard to this advance of 2s. 6d., which is to be 1s. 6d. to-day, 6d. in March, and another 6d. in September, I pointed this out to an hon. member, who turned round to me and said, "My profession is vanished owing to the war; why should not I be subsidised?" The hon. gentleman is subsidised as a member of Parliament to the extent of £300 per annum; but the farmer is not so subsidised. Is this industry worth keeping going at all, or not? At the Interstate Producers' Conference recently held in Melbourne the delegates were approached by Mr. Hagelthorne and Senator Russell and asked to propound some scheme showing the farmer that at any rate he would have returned to him what it cost him to put the wheat into the ground and on the market, and the reply was—

You ask us to propound some scheme.

We propose that you should finance part of this wheat, at any rate on paper, by wheat bonds. You will have the wheat behind you and these bills could pay 4½ per cent., redeemable, say, on 1st January, 1918, and the bank or the pool could withdraw these from circulation as they have funds available to obviate any undue risk of too much paper floating about.

I believe Senator Russell pool-pooled the idea and said he would have every branch of farming coming under the same proposal.

It was put forward as a likely proposition and one likely to help the Federal Government in the present times of difficulty. The farmer had to pay 4½ per cent, and the 2s. 6d. which he will get up to September next is not going to meet the position. We are not going to keep up our production. The area under cultivation will decrease largely owing to a variety of causes over which we have no control, and this is going to make the position worse. I want to pay a tribute to the late Minister for Lands, and also to the other members of the late Government. As a representative of an agricultural constituency, I may say that the requests I put before those gentlemen on various occasions have always been well received and given the greatest consideration.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): All of them?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Some of them, perhaps, were unreasonable. I think hon. members will agree that if I made an unreasonable request I was not unduly pressing in the matter, and did not underline my notes in red ink upon it.

Mr. FOLEY (Leonora) [8.4]: I have always considered with regard to my farming friends or their supposed representatives, that there was something wrong with their logic. That opinion was verified by the member for York, for in the last breath he got out another growl. He said he wished to compliment the late Minister and the late Government generally. If he was logical he should have been on this side of the House. I notice that there has been a desire expressed by all members on the other side of the Chamber, and especially those on the cross benches, that at the present time every thing of a party nature should be done away with. The very men who now represent the agriculturists in this Chamber want everything smoothed over because the party which now occupies the Opposition benches they wished to leave there. If the Labour party were on those benches now I guarantee that those words would not have been uttered, or would not have been acted upon. They were not acted upon so far as this industry was concerned by that party, with the exception, perhaps, of two men, who invariably spoke as fairly as it was possible to

speak. The member for York said that there was a gentleman at Quairading through whom he accused the Government of coercion. That gentleman was thrown on his own resources. He was a wheat agent and was not working for the Government but for a private firm which was exploiting the farmer. He had not received a penny of money for the last two years for doing the work, and only the other day asked me to interview the late Minister and see if some money could not be got for him. The member for Guildford could prove my statement. When we get a gentleman here who works for private enterprises and is not paid by them, coming along and growling, and endeavouring to point out per medium of the member representing the district, that the Government are endeavouring to coerce the farmers into doing something, that man is not worth much. The logic of my friend is bad in another direction. When Ministers have gone to visit the farmers in their districts, as soon as they have had an opportunity they have waited upon the Minister, and have endeavoured to get everything possible, and in some cases things that were not possible, out of him. According to these gentlemen, when these deputations come forward, their land is so poor that the crows will not fly over it. They start immediately the train arrives and are after something the whole time. There is generally a banquet in the evening and after the fourth or fifth toast we find that the land they are working on gradually becomes good and everything in the garden is lovely. If the land is as good as they say it is at the banquet after the fourth toast, they do not need any assistance; and if it is as bad as they said it was when waiting upon the Minister, it is not worth the Government's while helping them. The leader of the broad national party on the cross benches says that the land in the South-West will grow anything. He said that they could grow 14 tons of potatoes to the acre in this State. The member for Bunbury also waxed eloquent in regard to the country and its potato-growing proclivities.

Mr. Scaddan: If we want them down there we have to take them from Perth.

Mr. FOLEY: So far as the potato industry is concerned, the member for Bunbury says that acre for acre they could beat Vic-

toria. I interjected "Rubbish." I said that because I believed that they had not produced as much as Victoria has in the way of potatoes.

Mr. Scaddan: On the average.

Mr. FOLEY: On the average they have not either.

Mr. Nairn: The Federal Statistician says so.

Mr. FOLEY: The member for Nelson tells me that 14 tons per acre is the most he has ever seen in the way of potatoes in this State. There are places on the Yea River, at Warrnambool, the Hopkins River, on the flats at Gippsland, and on the Hawkesbury River, where they are producing more than 14 tons to the acre on hundreds of acres. So far as other farming produce is concerned I had an opportunity on Saturday of seeing what the State could do in their endeavour to develop the South-West, and in seeing what the country is capable of producing if it is properly looked after. I was down there where mixed farming was being carried out successfully under the Government. I do not say that any man leaving any industry in the State could carry on mixed farming to the same extent as the Government are now doing. If individual efforts and initiative had been shown 16 or 20 years ago, by a few people in the South-West, they would have been supplying all our goldfields, which is the best market in Australia, with butter and dairy produce of every description. Whilst the people down there are going in for sheep and other things, which do not take the time to look after that dairying does, I am afraid that we shall never have a dairying industry in the State. In South Gippsland the timber is bigger than any I have seen in this State except, perhaps, karri country, and it is harder to burn off than is the timber in this State. When the Gippsland country was first selected it was all taken up in 640 acre blocks, too much for any man to work. When, afterwards, it was subdivided into smaller holdings good livings were made on it. I will admit that more clearing was done by a large fire which went through the district than the settlers could have hoped to do in five or six years. So thorough was the work of that fire that all the survey pegs were burnt out, and the surveys had to be

remade. The member for Geraldton (Mr. Heitmann) pointed to the fact that the farmers have to contend against rust and drought, and hail and wind storms. He went on to compare the men on the land 20 years ago with those on the land to-day, and said that the comparison was hardly in favour of the men of the present time. In his opinion the Government ought to step in and help the man on the land to combat the adverse elements with which he is threatened. But how, I would ask, can any Government make rain, prevent rust, or ban hailstorms? Show me such a Government and I will vote for them. One thing certain is that no Government can help the farmers if the farmers will not help themselves. The leader of the Country party in another place has said in respect of the wheat pool that private enterprise should have been allowed free scope and that the Government should not have interfered. The members of the Country party in this Chamber say the wheat pool is good, but they are not getting enough from it. Of course we have long since given over expecting that party to be satisfied. In all my experiences I have never met more ungrateful people than those engaged in the agricultural industry. Of course not all the farmers are ungrateful, but some of them are amongst the most ungrateful people I know. The member for Bunbury (Mr. Thomas) congratulated the member for Geraldton on his sound arguments in support of the farmers. Then the hon. member went on to say that nothing had been done for the South-West. Of course it must be remembered that the South-West does not rely solely on the agricultural industry. There are other industries down there which must be fostered if the dairying and agricultural industries are to be developed. A sum of £210,000 has been spent on the State sawmills in the South-West. These mills are cutting the big timber and so preparing the land for dairying. Again the sawmills have built miles of railway and have attracted considerable population into the district. Then there is the £40,000 the Government paid for an irrigation scheme at Harvey, and on top of that we have £100,000 lying in hevn sleepers. The country from which those sleepers were cut is in consequence now partly cleared and

to that extent ready for cultivation. The Government have spent also a considerable sum of money on the butter factory in Bussellton, and much money has been expended on the Harvey estate. All these items represent a great deal of expenditure in the South-West. Then we come to the butter factory at Bunbury. It is not the people of Bunbury who provide the milk and cream, but mostly the people around Capel. When the late Minister for Lands proposed to erect a butter factory at Capel there was a howl of indignation from Bunbury and the cry was, "Do not take one of our industries away from us." Yet, as I have said, it is not Bunbury, but the outside districts, that provide the cream for the Bunbury butter factory, thus enabling the Bunbury shareholders to make large profits. In my opinion if the Government have done but little in the South-West—as a matter of fact they have done a great deal—the people in the district have done nothing whatever to help themselves. Until we have some alteration in the administration of the Lands Department, until we find a Minister who will break new ground, Western Australia can never hope to be successful as a farming or wheat-growing State. We cannot always be paying out to the farming industry. As members of Parliament as managers of the affairs of the State it is our duty to see that the money advanced to the farming industry is wisely spent; not to hamper or to put undue hardships on the farming industry, but to show the farmers how best to improve the industry. When an intending selector goes to the Lands Department to obtain land, the available land should be shown to him, but I am not an advocate that the land should be cleared. If there are unemployed, then it might be all right to put them on to clearing land, but I would insist that not one penny should be paid to any man until he had worked for it. At the first meeting I attended as a member of the unemployment distress fund I was instrumental in having the charity paid through that fund stopped and every penny which was afterwards paid out of the fund had first to be worked for. By this means not only is charity being done away with, but the unemployed are separated from the unemployable. Therefore, I say it is reasonable to put the unemployed on to

clearing land and when it has been cleared the Government should put an enhanced price upon it. But when a man goes to the Lands Department with the object of selecting land, a true statement should be given him, not fictitious statements such as were issued in connection with land selection in some of our eastern areas, when false statements were issued as to the rainfall. True statements should be given him regarding rainfall and regarding the probabilities and possibilities of the land for producing. If this were done, when the man went on to the Agricultural Bank for assistance the Bank would be able to determine whether the land was suitable, and they would also be able to decide whether the man himself was such as should be put on to that land. If the intending selector were not a fit person, the procedure should be the same as in the case of applications for assistance under the Mines Development Vote. The land should be refused him.

Mr Nairn: Would you refuse land to a man on the ground that he had not had experience?

Mr. FOLEY: I would not. When a person seeks assistance under the Mines Development Vote an inspector who knows the industry from A. to Z. examines him as to his qualifications and capability, and if the inspector of mines is satisfied with his replies then the prospector is given the assistance he asks for. Despite the thousands of pounds which this State pays for experts in the Agricultural Department, some of whom have an extraordinary amount of knowledge, I say they are useless because their expert knowledge is misdirected, and the money which is paid to those gentlemen would be better utilised if paid to retain the services of inspectors who are practical agriculturists and whose business it would be to examine intending selectors before being placed on the land. I have seen settlers in a portion of the wheat area, or rather where it was expected they should grow wheat but where it was impossible to do so because of the poison on the land, and I say it was a sin to see those poor devils there.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: What district are you referring to?

Mr. FOLEY: I am speaking now of land near Kojonup. I claim that I or any other member of the House could if two men were placed before us tell whether either, and if so which, of those men had initiative, and it would not take a man practical in any industry very long to decide whether either or both of such men were likely to make a success in that industry. A fit man who is a worker will always get work in any district which he goes into, but the man who is unfit will not. Until the Government makes it absolutely imperative that intending selectors shall be put through some form of examination and shall insist that after land has been granted to a selector he shall comply with the covenants or the land be taken from him, as is done in the mining areas, there will be no improvement in the agricultural industry. There are many men to-day holding large areas of land upon which nothing is being done while in the same districts probably dozens of others are properly working their land.

Mr. Smith: Do you mean that they are dummying?

Mr. FOLEY: A former Minister belonging to the party behind which the hon. member now sits, when the present member for Boulder brought a case of dummying before him, which was driven home right to the hilt, failed to take any action because the man guilty of dummying was a friend of the hon. member. We know the harm dummying has done in the mining industry. The ex-Minister to whom I have referred refused to take action in respect of a man of whom it was known he had been dummying on the goldfields for years. Had I been in the House at that time I could have given the public some information which would have resulted in his being hounded out of this State long before he did leave it. As a representative of a goldfields constituency I do not wish to say anything disparaging of farmers generally, but I do say that the administration of the Agricultural Act and regulations and of the agricultural industry generally is rotten to the core and the sooner it is mended the better. I will not quibble as to whether this applies to the Industries Assistance Board, the Agricultural Bank or to any of the other phases of the industry. But until we obtain a Minis-

ter for Lands who will take a firm stand and will not allow the Act to be evaded, and will not permit unfit men to be placed on the land, the State will continue to go back and the industry will remain what it has been up to the present time. It is alleged that the goldfields members are not acquainted with this subject, but with the exception of the working of farm machinery I will back any member on this side of the House, whether it be axe-work, squaring sleepers or looking after stock—

Mr. Smith: Can they milk cows?

Mr. FOLEY: Yes, they can.

Mr. Smith: Yes, probably the State cow.

Mr. FOLEY: On last year's estimates I had a good deal to say in regard to the agricultural experts. My opinions as then expressed have not altered in any way and I now repeat that until the people of the South-West take notice of the undoubted ability these officers possess, then every man in this State is being taxed unfairly for the upkeep of those experts. I had an opportunity of visiting the Brunswick State farm last week and it is a credit to everybody concerned. It is well kept and I believe well administered, the stock looked well and I trust that those men and women whom I saw there representing the agricultural and dairying industries in the South-West will take notice of what they saw there and endeavour to profit by it.

Mr. LAMBERT (Coolgardie) [8:40]: I wish to have a word or two to say on this vote. We have heard a lot said about the productiveness of the land by members of Parliament, but I think that the farmer has a greater right to talk about the productiveness or unproductiveness of Parliament. The rubbish which I have had to listen to on this vote has been the worst I have ever heard since I have been a member of this House. I had thought I should get some information from the speeches of hon. members as to the necessity for the very high expenditure which we find under some of these headings, but I have not been given the slightest information. The member for Leonora certainly made an eloquent speech, but I believe that if I made a determined attempt I could exceed him with an address on generalities regarding the quality of soil and such like. The

speeches so far have not given any information to the man who desired information as to the necessity for this expenditure. Many statements have been made as to the ability of the Commissioner for the Wheat Belt, and the necessity for the appointment. I have heard it in the lobby, but never on the floor of the House. Seeing that the necessity for these various items of expenditure has not been touched upon, I hope that the Minister for Agriculture will give goldfield members an opportunity of gauging whether the expenditure set out in the Estimates is justified. There is an enormous vote under this heading, and a very restricted vote under the heading of mining, yet in respect of the latter we know justification could be shown for an increase. But that increase is not forthcoming with the result that the Minister for Mines, who has a desire to assist the development of the industry, is restricted in that desire by the paltry sum of money which has been placed at his disposal. I would like to hear some members of the Country party on these respective votes. The statement has been made generally that in these agricultural areas enormous sums of money have been wasted. We know, as far as the State is concerned, that we have impoverished land with a limited rainfall, and we have attempted to put settlers there and teach them farming at the State's expense. If we are going to continue in that way we shall have not only the deficit, which it is alleged has been left to the present Government by their predecessors, but one which will be ten times as large. It is time to cry a halt, too, in the building of agricultural railways.

Mr. Smith: Rubbish.

Mr. LAMBERT: Notwithstanding the fact that my friend said "rubbish," he knows that as far as the building of agricultural lines in this State is concerned, the time has arrived when we should cry a halt and view the position as we find it to-day. I have no desire to discount the value of the agricultural industry, but I do considerably discount the efforts which have been made in the past to develop the industry. We hear our friends opposite talking glibly about lowering the price of

the carriage of fertilisers, but they must know that if the superphosphate industry were a State monopoly, the farmers would be saved a quarter of a million of money.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: You cannot get the phosphatic rock.

Mr. LAMBERT: No attempt has been made to get it. It would be obtainable if we only made a serious attempt to secure it, but so far they have only toyed with it. It is colossal nonsense for a man to talk about the great South-West and its potentialities. I was down at the Yallingup Caves only a year or two ago and they supplied there in the shape of food, tinned fish, tinned fruit, tinned milk, tinned vegetables, and possibly tinned dog. I would like to have heard a general and sincere discussion on the expenditure which is being incurred in connection with the employment of the permanent heads of the various branches of this department, and whether they are men of real utility in the direction of helping the agricultural industry. I desire to get some information under the respective heads in the hope of being able to make suggestions in the direction of exercising economy where that economy is justified. If £5,000 or £10,000 can be cut out and the services of some of the permanent heads done away with, it would be an advantage to the State. Mr. Smith only the other night asked a question about the utility of certain heads of departments. There are a lot of heads in this department whose services could be dispensed with.

The Minister for Works: What would you do with them?

Mr. LAMBERT: I would put them on the land and see whether they could do any good. We know that the Brunswick State Farm is run under ideal conditions yet the Commissioner for the South-West is quite unable to make it pay.

Mr. Allen: Mr. Connor would tell you differently.

Mr. LAMBERT: I urge the Minister to do his utmost in the direction of exercising economy so far as the heads of the various departments are concerned.

Mr. PIESSE (Toodyay) [8.52]: I sympathise with the member for Coolgardie, who is anxious to get all the information possible, because I know that information is



not easily obtained, and so far as the items on the Estimates are concerned we have the testimony of the late Minister for Lands, and also the present Minister, that the vote has been cut down to the lowest minimum. Whilst there is a recognised desire on the part of the Minister to place the Lands Department on a sound and workable basis and advance land settlement generally, I regret that he should have given expression to the view that the work of constructing agricultural railways should stop. We would not have had an 18 million bushel harvest last season if it had not been for our agricultural railways.

Mr. Taylor: And you would not have had the deficit staring you in the face.

Mr. PIESSE: That deficit is due to want of business acumen on the part of the late Ministers. I can give hon. members instances of the lack of business acumen in the direction of the construction of railways departmentally. The carrying out of this policy has retarded the progress of agriculture in the State. I do not say this in any unfriendly spirit. Take the Bolgart extension as an instance. That is only a short length of railway which should have been built in a tithe of the time which was actually taken to construct it, and whilst the line was being built, the uncomplaining settlers were carting their wheat a distance of 14 and 15 miles. If the line had been built under the contract system it would have been completed long before the time it was actually ready. Let me refer to the line from Dowerin to Merredin. I have heard members state that its construction was not justified. But only last year something like a million bags of wheat were carried over it. Does that show whether the expenditure was justified in the construction of the line? It is only the energy and push on the part of the people who settled on the land and proved the capability of the soil that induced the Government to build many of the agricultural railways, and but for these railways we would still have a great deal of virgin country. With all due respect to hon. members opposite, they know very little about the subject. There are, of course, a few members in this House who have had experience of investment in the land. I refer

particularly to the members for Guildford and Kanowna. I regret that the Minister has not informed the Committee that it is the intention of the Government to bring down a new Land Bill. Such a measure would have added one more to the many on the Notice Paper but it is absolutely necessary. The present Act was framed to suit the conditions in congenial districts and it is totally inapplicable to inland settlement where the conditions of settlement are so trying that it is necessary that more generous conditions should be provided. I know it is the desire of the House that we should get through these Estimates as speedily as possible and while I could suggest many alternations, I will refrain from doing so. I can only express the hope that everything will be done to enable the settlement of the inland areas to be carried out successfully. Let us consider the position of land settlement to-day as affecting the returned soldier. I personally have not too much hope of making land settlement a success from that point of view. Practical men are aware that it requires the strongest of constitutions to go on the land, and that a wounded or enfeebled man would be out of place there. Other avenues should be opened for our wounded soldiers. With regard to the re-ricing of lands, there are certain anomalies to be remedied, and I trust the Government will give particular consideration to the subject. The system adopted by the present Government of assisting settlers under the Industries Assistance Board is highly satisfactory. That assistance represents a perfectly safe investment. If one district alone will produce a million bags of wheat, it is within reason that other districts will do well. In connection with the re-ricing of lands, I hope the Government will also give attention to the question of poison leases. While the price of poison land has been reduced by half, the term of the lease has been reduced by 50 per cent.

Mr. Angwin: The Government should give people poison land for nothing.

Mr. PIESSE: I agree with that interjection, because there is poison land which takes a lifetime to clear.

Mr. TAYLOR (Mt. Margaret) [9.6]: I wish to know from the Minister for Lands

as regards the expenditure on the Lands Department alone, apart from the department of Agriculture, whether he considers he has made the necessary economies for this year, taking into consideration the volume of the work now being done, and likely to be done during the remainder of the year. We know there has been little or nothing done for some time past in the Lands Department of this State except to endeavour to finance those who have been on the land for some years. The member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) when Minister for Lands created such a fictitious land boom, and settled so many people on the land during two or three years, that the finances of the State have been drained ever since in the not entirely successful endeavour to keep those people on the land. Hundreds of the settlers then placed on the land have now left it, and their farms are thrown on the hands of the Agricultural Bank—some of them valueless, and some in even a worse state than when they were first taken up. In view of these facts, is the proposed expenditure of the Lands Department justified? I believe the department are now mainly occupied in granting exemptions and trying to collect rents. One matter to which I desire to draw the attention of the present Minister for Lands, as I have drawn to it that of his predecessors, is the exorbitant rental on pastoral lands on the goldfields. People who try to raise stock in the goldfields areas have to pay exactly the same rental as squatters in the Kimberleys and other holders of what has been described as the finest grazing land in Australia. The Agricultural Department are spending thousands of pounds to keep the rabbits out of the grazing country of the North-West, and at the same time fencing in the rabbits on the goldfields; holders of both classes of pastoral land are charged the same rental. I hope the Minister, when dealing with the items, will be able to justify the expenditure shown on his Estimates.

Mr. WALKER (Kanowna) [9.11]: I have listened with great interest to the charge of unfairness levelled against the present Government and preceding Governments in respect of their treatment of certain portions of the State. It seems to me that the Committee are more or less divided into

groups, one being for the South-West, "the paradise of the world," another for the North-West, of which a similar picture is drawn, and a third for the wheat belt. So far, however, not one member has put his finger upon the greatest wrong that has been done to any portion of the country by the present Government. I refer to the portion of this great State that I represent. There can be no question but that the electorate I represent in this Assembly is in itself a State—capable of being worked up to the dignity of a State. The area is sufficient for a State of its own. Had that district received proper treatment, had it received even the mildest kind of consideration that has been extended to every other portion of the State, it would be a flourishing asset of the Commonwealth. Last night I was promised that this evening I should be told why that portion of the State is neglected, even in a presumed attempt to deal with it fairly. The Royal Commission on Esperance lands has travelled all through the district, presumably away from the beaten track, and made some examination of the country. The settlers have given their testimony; and, from all the information I have received, the evidence is unequivocal—proving that the country has supported men on farms for years, with all the disabilities attending their operations, and in spite of all the neglect which has been their portion at the hands of the present Government and of previous Governments. The testimony further affirms the fact that under proper cultivation the country is a fertile section of the State, capable of being compared with similar country in South Australia, which has practically made the State of South Australia; and yet the Royal Commission hang up the matter. We are to wait until the end of January—practically until the session is over—whilst one Royal Commissioner attends to his own private business, attends to the shearing on his selection. Meantime the whole of that area, which has pledged its faith to Governments year in and year out for a quarter of a century, is to languish. That area has suffered a wrong, the like of which was never perpetrated, and is never likely to be perpetrated, in any other portion of the civilised world.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: A bad advertisement for the whole of Western Australia.

Mr. WALKER: Undoubtedly. Some little time ago the question of this area was under discussion in this Chamber, and we were assured by a Minister of the Crown that there would be no delay in the furnishing of the Royal Commission's report—that, in fact, the report would be expedited. A further assurance was given that, as soon as the report had been made available and it was shown that the Esperance country had land fit for settlement, the construction of the Esperance Northwards railway would proceed. Yet now we find, while the Royal Commission are delaying their report, that the Government have on their Estimates provided nothing to continue the construction of the railway. Therefore, if the report were received to-morrow, the wrong that has been done would not be remedied, and the promise of the Ministry to this House would be violated. I submit that here we have one of the gravest charges against the Lands Department. The Minister for Lands deals with the settled portions of this country; but part of his administration refers to the further settlement of Western Australia. I would like to know what sincerity there is in a Government which talks about making provision for the thousands who are to come annually after the war is over to make their future homes under the Southern skies, but which deliberately by their conduct and their treatment of the Esperance district lock up what is practically a State in itself, a land capable under proper treatment of supporting millions of inhabitants. They have tabooed it and slandered it and it has gone forth to the whole world that the State of Australia has an exceedingly large portion in it of desert unfit for habitation at all, and yet here we have settlers who, in spite of the cruelty of the Government and the wrong which has been done, will not give up their holdings and will not leave the district. They are waiting there with implicit faith and confidence, and this in spite of the mismanagement that we have had in our Agricultural Departments. Words fail one in describing a wrong so egregious and in adequately depicting the meanness of public

life, the spirit of political revenge that can penalise a whole district, inflict untold hardships and cover inhabitants with woe in order that they may inflict a paltry political revenge upon their political opponents.

Mr. MUNSIE (Hannans) [9.17]: I want to reply first of all to one or two statements which have been made by the member for Toodyay in drawing attention to the delay so far as the previous Government is concerned in the extension of the agricultural railway known as the Bolgart extension.

The CHAIRMAN: That is nothing to do with the matter before the House. This is a question of the expenditure of moneys in the Lands Department and has nothing to do with railways. I have no desire to burke discussion, but we will never get finished if we are going to allow railways to be mixed up with land.

Mr. MUNSIE: With all due deference to you, Sir, I think that every member who has spoken in this Chamber has mentioned agricultural railways. We are dealing with land and agricultural development in this State and I contend that to develop this State we must build agricultural railways. I will, however, take an opportunity of saying what I intended to say on this question when dealing with the railway Estimates. With regard to the remarks of the member for Bunbury he said that nothing had been done up-to-date by any of the Governments with regard to educating the farmer for his own benefit. Only the other day the Minister for Lands sent me an invitation to visit the Brunswick State farm for the purpose of seeing what the South-West was capable of producing under proper supervision. We have also a State farm at Narrogin and another in the Geraldton district. I contend that the previous Government have done a considerable amount in the direction of educating the farmer in the best method to pursue for the successful cultivation of our lands. The leader of the Country party by interjection inferred that nothing had been done for the fruit growers. We have down on the Estimates a sum of £750 for an expert in fruit, namely, Mr. Moody. In my opinion, that officer has given splendid advice to the orchardists of this State.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: And they refused to take it for a number of years.

Mr. MUNSIE: In many instances the men who endeavoured to make orchards in the State persisted in going on their own knowledge and refused to accept the good advice tendered by that officer. While I believe there is a considerable amount of land in the South-West that is first-class dairy country, mention has also been made of the settlers of the Denmark district. I believe that the previous Government brought about a reduction in the price of land to the settlers in that district, but I am perfectly satisfied that we are not going to get settlers to take up that land if we charge them anything for it. In the interests of the State, particularly from the point of view of producing sufficient dairy produce for our own requirements, I think we should make that land available free to the settler. Some of the settlers are as fine a class of settler as one could wish to find anywhere in Australia, but this land is practically breaking their hearts because of the work entailed and the enormous difficulties to be overcome in making their homes there and in clearing the land. No doubt the Agricultural Bank have advanced a fair amount of money per acre for the clearing of portion of that land. I visited some of the thicket country at Denmark a little while ago, and if I was offered a bonus of £500 and given a hundred acres of the best land on condition that I provided a home for myself there, I would not accept the offer. Some means will have to be provided whereby we can assist these men to clear a sufficient quantity of land to enable them to make a living.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: This land has already been cleared. It is a question of re-clearing.

Mr. MUNSIE: Not the portion to which I refer. Where Karri timber is rung there are even more difficult problems before the settler. The suckers are growing there to such an extent that unless we can by scientific experiments find that we can make use of that timber, I do not think anyone would undertake the clearing of the land. As a representative of a goldfields electorate I wish to emphasise the fact that a good deal has been said in the House with regard to the amount of assistance granted to the farmer. In my opinion all the farmers are not ungrateful for the assistance

rendered to them by the previous Government, but a considerable number of them are ungrateful for the assistance which was offered. During the abnormal conditions that prevailed owing to the drought during the season before last it was absolutely imperative for the Government of the day to assist the settler who was holding land. Not only was this assistance necessary to the settler himself, but particularly in the interests of the people who had money in the Savings Bank. From the point of view of security the Government were bound to assist these men. I quite believe that 90 per cent. of the farmers who were assisted in this State were men who had previous assistance from the Agricultural Bank.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: You could say 98 per cent.

Mr. MUNSIE: That being the case it must be remembered that quite four millions of money, which was put into the Agricultural Bank for the purpose of assisting the farmer, was money which had been placed in the Government Savings Bank by the people of the State. No matter what assistance the farmers got or what any Government are prepared to do for them, we still have hon. members getting up and telling us that it is impossible for the farmer to make a success under existing circumstances. If wheat growing here is as bad as it is said to be by representatives of farming constituencies, it is time we considered the position of removing the settlers from the land altogether. No Government in the world could continue to go on giving assistance if by doing so they could not make the industry self-supporting.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: It is a question of getting stock.

Mr. MUNSIE: It has been said that there is only one way of making the farming industry pay and that is to encourage the settler to go in for stock.

Mr. Hickmott: That is the only hope.

Mr. MUNSIE: If the present Government are in power when the next Estimates are introduced I hope they will make a big alteration in the direction of providing assistance to settlers so that they can purchase the necessary stock.

Mr. Underwood: It is also a question of getting water for the stock.

Mr. MUNSIE: This is a very sore point with me so far as agriculturists are concerned. The late Government did more to provide water for the farmers of the State than any other Government in the State of the Commonwealth or the British Dominions.

Mr. Underwood: There are millions of acres for which it is impossible to provide water.

Mr. MUNSIE: Hundreds of thousands of pounds have been spent by the late Government in providing water for the farmer which no one hears about.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: And well spent, too.

Mr. MUNSIE: That is so. It is up to hon. members to stop crying stinking fish in respect of wheat growing. If the position is as bad as some hon. members say, then for heaven's sake let us get out of it. Personally, I do not believe it is as bad as that. I must congratulate the Minister on the reductions shown in the Estimates. At the same time I hope hon. members will endeavour to make still further reductions. Several items shown might well be reduced at least 50 per cent., while others could be wiped out altogether to the advantage of the State.

This concluded the general debate on the Lands and Surveys Estimates; votes and items discussed as follows:—

Vote—*Lands and Surveys, £44,587*:

Item, Clerks, £917.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: There is among these clerks one in charge of the inspection branch at a salary of £216. Other clerks in similar positions receive £270. I happen to know that the duties of the clerk in charge of the inspection branch involve a great deal of responsibility.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I will be pleased to look into the matter.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: In any case it is a question for the Public Service Commissioner.

Item, Chief Draftsman, £432.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: During last year's discussion hon. members drew attention to the enormous cost of drafting in the Lands Department. In reply to the criticism I intimated that a board would be appointed to investigate the cost of drafting, and to see whether a lot of the overlapping could not be avoided. The board was appointed and brought in a report demonstrating that

many thousands of pounds could be saved by combining a number of the drafting branches. That board pointed to many economies which could be effected. I strongly urge the Minister to put that report into operation.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I quite agree that a great deal could be saved if some of this overlapping could be dispensed with. I am thankful to the hon. member for having drawn my attention to the report, which I will certainly call for and peruse.

Item, Temporary Surveyors and Officers not otherwise provided for, £270.

Mr. MUNSIE: I would like some information in respect to this item.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I find from my notes that it is only one surveyor at a salary of £270. The item is accounted for by the fact that a permanent surveyor was injured and a temporary appointment made to fill his place.

Item, District Land and Survey Office, Bridgetown, Computers and Draftsmen, £516.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: A little further down the Estimates provision is made for the reinstatement of the district office at Northam. I agree that these offices should be re-opened.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: It will be a scandal if they are.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I am sorry that while provision is made for the re-opening of the Northam office similar provision is not made for the re-opening of the offices at Geraldton, Albany, and Narrogin. From the office at Narrogin practically the whole of the Great Southern lands were controlled. I wish to congratulate the Government on their decision to re-open these offices, and to ask why provision is not made for the reopening of the other offices I have enumerated.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I wish to congratulate the Government on not having re-introduced this wasteful expenditure. One of the wildest things ever initiated was the establishment of these district land offices. It was an absolute waste of money, designed purely to placate certain towns and give them a staff of fairly highly paid civil servants with nothing to do. When the pro-

vious Government decided to close these offices in the interests of economy, representations were made that the Bridgetown office should be left open. It was pointed out to me as Minister that various lands in the vicinity had just been surveyed and thrown open for selection, and that the continuation of the Bridgetown office would facilitate settlement there. I agreed to allow it to continue for 12 months. Up to the time I left office the expectations were not realised. There is no justification whatever for continuing this Bridgetown office. I hope the Minister will not be influenced by parochialism on the part of certain hon. members to rush into this wild and useless expenditure once more. I want the Minister to extend the closing down to apply to Bridgetown, where the experiment has not been justified.

Vote put and passed.

This completed the Estimates of the Lands Department.

Department of Agriculture (Hon. H. B. Lefroy, Minister).

Vote — *Development of Agriculture, £11,315:*

Item, Commissioner for the Wheat Belt, £756.

MR. UNDERWOOD: We have four of these commissioners, and last night we voted a sum of £700 for an agricultural professor at the University. We are paying infinitely too high a price for expert advice. This is shown by the fact that it has been found necessary to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into the agricultural industry. Leaving that point aside, however, we have to recollect that we have not the facilities for shipping wheat after it has been grown. What is the use of spending thousands a year for services of men to show us how to grow wheat when it cannot be disposed of after it has been grown. By deleting these items for experts a saving of £3,000 or £4,000 could be effected, because a similar position arises in the case of the Fruit Commissioner. Shortly we shall be having fruit for export, but again we shall not have ships to take it away. Therefore why pay £1,000 to an expert to show us how to grow fruit? Since this is a time when economy should be practised, I would recommend

these items to the attention of the Minister for Agriculture.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am surprised that the hon. member should suggest that these officers be dispensed with. Merely because we cannot ship our wheat away he suggests that we should discontinue the growing of wheat. In my opinion we should redouble our efforts and endeavour to produce it to a much larger extent than at any previous time. With reference to the wheat expert, everyone knows Mr. Sutton is an officer of great knowledge and energy. It is a pity that we cannot have more of his time devoted entirely to giving advice to the farmers, instead of being appointed on so many boards which now take up so much of his time. He has done a great work in Western Australia, and I would remind the Committee that it takes some time for an expert to become acquainted with the whole of Western Australia, and now that this officer is *au fait* with our country his services are most valuable to the Government and to the State.

MR. TAYLOR: I understand from the Minister that the services of these experts are valuable. But if the position be that an expert has been retained and his advice presented to the Government, and it is found after six years of such expert advice the Government deems it necessary to appoint a Royal Commission to advise them as to the suitability of certain areas for wheat production and general agriculture, then that is a reflection upon the experts. I am merely placing the position as I find it. This officer, I presume, is an expert on wheat growing and it is not fair that he should be put on to other work in regard to which he is not expert.

HON. J. D. CONNOLLY (Honorary Minister): That is not true. He is doing both to-day.

MR. TAYLOR: Then I say that is unfair. He cannot be expected to be an expert in both branches, and cannot be expected to meet the demands made on him. Before going to the expense of appointing the royal commission which is now touring the country, the Government should have given this officer the chance of proving his skill and ability in regard to wheat growing. The whole services of this officer should have been devoted to advising the farmers as

to wheat growing and on no other work. The argument of the Minister that because these officers are permanent they should not be dispensed with is a very weak one. If it has been possible to take this officer off his special duties as wheat expert and put him on to other work, then it must be that the desire for expert knowledge has not been very great in the past and if that be the position then I say the experts could be done away with. I am not asking that the Government shall take this view but I do say that such a view would be amply justified in the circumstances. I repeat, it is unfair to the officer himself to take him away from expert work which the Government show a desire to have done, and for which Parliament has provided £756 per annum; it is unfair that he should be taken from this and put on work which probably a man at £300 per annum could do equally well.

Mr. Underwood: He is taken away and put on to any old job which is floating around.

Mr. TAYLOR: The hon. gentleman has been a Minister for sometime and doubtless he is speaking with authority.

Mr. Angwin: The expert has been engaged on most important jobs.

Mr. TAYLOR: Here we have two Ministers who disagree on the point of the value of the work this expert is on. If this officer's services are of the great value ascribed to him, he is something more than a wheat expert and the item should embrace all his avocations, so that members might know exactly what they are voting for. The item is for a wheat expert and the salary I think is a reasonable one for that position. If the position is to be retained this officer should occupy all his time advising wheat growers to the best of his ability.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: We have heard a good deal to-night regarding the necessity for developing the South-West from the member for Bunbury. It is wonderful how eloquent that hon. member can become on matters of which he has no knowledge. Being unhampered with knowledge, he consequently runs wild. It is remarkable that the member for Bunbury, who represents a portion of the South-West, has so little

knowledge of the part of the country which he represents as to say that nothing has been done for the South-West. During the last year or two a genuine effort has been made to develop the South-West on the lines which he himself has indicated. I would impress upon the Committee that a discount must be placed on the value of our agricultural industry so far as the outside world is concerned, so long as we continue to import dairy produce, as we do to-day. Until we develop the South-West and feed our own people, without going outside for our dairy produce, we cannot expect to get that flow of agricultural immigration we should all like to see. The member for Bunbury, however, desires us to rush into a wild scheme something like the one a previous Government rushed into, in a desire to develop the Denmark area. In that case the Government were influenced to do something very similar to that which the hon. member would like to see the Government repeat to-day, when large areas of land were cleared before it was known that the people would take up the land. In the end our effort had to be made to keep down the undergrowth on the cleared land by importing goats.

Mr. Underwood: On a point of order; the hon. member is discussing the development of the South-West. I wanted to discuss an item before that. I rose at the same time as the member for Guildford, and certainly indicated that I wanted to speak on an item preceding the one he is discussing.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Pilbara is entitled to refer to the item preceding "Development of the South-West."

Mr. UNDERWOOD: The item I wish to refer to is "Commissioner for Wheat Belt." I regret the Minister for Lands did not reply to my remarks. Instead of that, he devoted his time to calling me a pessimist. A straightforward reply would have been preferable. The hon. gentleman has not attempted to give us any proof that this officer is not useless at the present time. We grew wheat long before we had an expert here, and when we bring an expert from the Eastern States it must be remembered that he has to learn from the experience of the people who have been here

for many years. At the present juncture and in the present condition of the industry, if we can save £1,000 we should do so.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the hon. member propose to move to delete the item?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I prefer to speak on it generally. We find that wheat growing alone will not pay, that we must have stock, but we do not want a wheat expert to tell us that. People found it out 20 years ago. We have had the wheat expert with us for six years, and I think at the present time we can do without him and without some of the other experts.

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

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: It is the desire of the member for Bunbury that we should perpetuate the blunder which was made at Denmark. The difficulty regarding the settlement of the South-West is purely one of population, and until we increase that, we shall not get the bigger settlement that we would like to see there, but those who are there should be encouraged to do more. Denmark was one of the most difficult propositions that had to be faced from the South-West development point of view. There we had a good class of settlers, but they were working under impossible conditions. The Government established a small buttery factory there, and in conjunction with it established a bacon factory. It was small, it is true, but it had the desired effect, and that, combined with the repriceing of the land in the Denmark areas, put these people in a fair way of making a success of the proposition. There was a butter factory struggling along at Busselton for the past ten years. It was established with Government assistance, but the people neglected to milk the cows. The Government took it over, and approached the settlers with a view of getting an increased supply of milk. But we found that a number of those who held the best land in close proximity to the factory refused to milk their cows, because they were making sufficient money out of sheep. We tried to get the land subdivided for dairying purposes, but we were unable to do that. Afterwards we managed to put the factory on a better basis, and I understand it has met with some success now. After an inspection of the South-West I came to the

conclusion that one of the best developed areas from the dairying point of view was undoubtedly the Capel district. I met the settlers also and endeavoured to start them in a co-operative scheme, and the only discouragement I received was from shareholders of the Bunbury factory, who appealed to me not to take their source of supply from them. They wanted the settlers to perpetually cart their cream to them, so as to keep the Bunbury factory going. There are fewer cows milked in the Bunbury area to-day than was the case years ago, and it is interesting to find that when one makes a genuine effort to get a factory established where there is a guarantee of some success, an appeal is made not to proceed in that direction. We know that a considerable amount of money is being spent on the Bunbury harbour works.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Is the hon. member in order in discussing the Bunbury harbour works?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I purposely selected this item so that I might be able to talk generally on the development of the South-West. If the Bunbury harbour is not being constructed for the purpose of assisting the South-West then it is no use proceeding with it at all. In regard to the development of the Harvey district, an Irrigation Act was passed to encourage the further development of that part of the State, and an immediate start was made towards establishing an irrigation area at Harvey to demonstrate what could be done by way of irrigation. We have 600 acres of land cleared there, and we have had it ploughed, yet there is no clamour from the people of the South-West to take it up.

Mr. Thomas: A whole 600 acres cleared!

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Yes, and 40 acres are quite sufficient to keep any settler fully occupied. This land can be irrigated, and it is all ready for immediate occupation. What is the use of the hon. member appealing to the Chamber to clear more land when already we have this big area cleared and ploughed? The least practical man in the House is the member for Bunbury. In Bunbury is a butter factory which cannot be maintained by the people of Bunbury. I do not know whether it is that they are too lazy. I recognise the value of the district,



and also recognise the difficulty of arousing enthusiasm in the dairying industry. The adoption of the suggestion made by the member for Bunbury would render the position worse.

[*Mr. Holman resumed the Chair.*]

Mr. THOMAS: The 600 acres at Harvey to which the member for Guildford has referred as having been cleared and thrown open for selection have been cleared, but have not been specifically thrown open for selection. In any case, cut up into 40 acre blocks that area would only meet the needs of 15 persons. The member for Guildford showed his hand plainly to-night as regards the South-West. His rather disgraceful attack upon the Bunbury butter factory shows that he has never had any sympathy with the South-West. He said that factory was committing a fraud by pretending to manufacture butter while really importing it from the Eastern States. One of the reasons why the development of the South-West has not progressed as fast as it should have, lies in the fact that the district came under the influence of the member for Guildford. The hon. member has repeatedly taken advantage of his position in this House to belittle the industries established in the South-West. While the hon. member was Minister for Lands he did, it is true, try to establish a South-Western butter factory; but his management ruined it. The factory has been taken over by the present Minister for Lands and is proving a success—it is now turning out two tons of butter a week. Fortunately, the South-Western district is not now under the administration of the member for Guildford.

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

Mr. HICKMOTT: This seems a large amount to spend for inspection, especially as the Estimates contain another item of £9,000 for the rabbit-proof fence. How is the money expended, and is the work done worth the expenditure?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: As hon. members are aware, the State has a very large extent of rabbit-proof fencing, 2,034 miles altogether, to be looked after by the Chief Inspector and his staff. Proper inspection is essential.

Mr. MUNSIE: The item appears under the heading "Rabbits and Vermin Boards." The salaries of the Chief Inspector and his staff total £1,120. Do these officers perform any other work besides the inspection of rabbit-proof fences? Have they any duties connected with vermin boards?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Their sole duty is to look after the rabbit-proof fences. I do not know whether any vermin boards exist now.

Mr. TAYLOR: What amount of time does the chief inspector put in on inspecting the fence, and what time does he put in in his office in Perth?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I cannot tell the hon. member exactly the amount of time he puts in in the different places. He has to see that the inspectors who have the control of these fences are doing their duty. It is impossible for one man to overlook 2,000 miles of fencing.

Mr. TAYLOR: How often does the chief inspector personally inspect the fences during the course of the year?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: When he is out looking into the work of the inspectors he personally inspects the fence. The responsibility of looking after the fence is entirely upon the boundary riders.

Mr. BUTCHER: The duties of the chief inspector are very hard and he holds a responsible position. He is responsible to the country for keeping 2,000 miles of fencing in order. He is also responsible for the vermin board at Carnarvon. These fences are doing a great deal of good in the way of protecting some of our best pastoral country. Mr. Crawford is doing his duty well, and so are his staff doing their duty well. He has also to visit the different stations and see that the settlers are keeping down the rabbits on their holdings.

Mr. TAYLOR: Is any travelling allowance granted to the chief inspector over and above his salary?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: This officer gets the ordinary travelling allowance provided for under the regulations.

Item, Rabbit-proof fences, expense of upkeep generally, including wages, £9,000.

Mr. SMITH: There are more rabbits inside No. 1 fence than there are outside, and

yet to-day inspectors are patrolling these fences at great expense to the country. I think we could do away with this particular fence altogether. It could be taken up and given to the farmers. I move an amendment—

*That the item be reduced by £2,000.*

Mr. MULLANY: I support the amendment and had intended to move for a reduction of £4,000. Last year the money spent in this way was wasted, and it is to be wasted again this year if it is spent. This particular fence was constructed 14 years ago because it was feared that the rabbits might invade the pastoral and agricultural parts of the State. There are rabbits on both sides of No. 2 fence, and along the beach at Geraldton one can always see rabbits. It is an open question as to whether the fences are used to keep the rabbits in or keep them out. The rabbit-proof fence extends from Ravensthorpe to Port Hedland. This so-called rabbit-proof fence is undoubtedly of great service to pastoralists in the North-West. The squatters between that fence and the coast know well that their stock cannot get away, and that is undoubtedly one reason why they desire to keep it in a proper state of repair. For the purpose of keeping the rabbits in check the fence is absolutely valueless. I do not desire merely to draw attention to this question and have it discussed; I want the expenditure to cease. However, half the year has gone, and so I suggest to the member for North Perth that he should amend his motion accordingly. I have pleasure in supporting the hon. member.

Mr. BUTCHER: I was rather amused at the hon. member's description of the rabbit-proof fences and the use to which he seems to think they are put. Also, his knowledge of the geography of Western Australia is amusing. Those fences were put up for the protection of the pastoral areas in the first place, and they have served a good purpose. In addition to the three main rabbit-proof fences we have the vermin board's fence, which was constructed by the pastoralists at their own expense.

Mr. Underwood: At whose expense?

Mr. BUTCHER: The money was borrowed from the Government and the pastoralists are paying interest on it to-day.

Mr. Scaddan: Can you show us on the Estimates where that interest is credited?

Mr. BUTCHER: I understand all the pastoralists have paid their rates regularly since the amendment of the Act. The hon. member's Government made the conditions impossible for some of the smaller settlers.

Mr. Scaddan: Not the Government; it was a board.

Mr. BUTCHER: However, all within the area are paying their rates to-day, and it is only fair that the Government should maintain the fence. It would be a crime if the rabbit-proof fences were neglected. Would anyone suggest that the pastoral industry is not worth protecting? It is the principal industry in Western Australia. I hope the item will not be reduced.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM: I yield to no one in my desire for economy; still these rabbit-proof fences were erected to protect the industries of the State against the encroachment of rabbits, and it would be wrong to reduce the vote provided for the maintenance of those fences. From all that one can learn, the rabbits are spreading, and at an early date we will have to go into the question of whether it is desirable to maintain the fences any longer. In the meantime I think it would be wise to continue to maintain the fences.

Mr. MUNSIE: I will support the motion moved by the member for North Perth. When the fences were built it was necessary to do something to protect the industries against the rabbits, but I am satisfied to-day that there are as many rabbits between the fences as there are outside. Still, I do not think the rabbits are likely to do much harm to either the pastoral or the agricultural industry. Eleven or twelve years ago one could shoot as many rabbits on the lakes between Kalgoorlie and Broad Arrow as one could carry away. More recently there were no rabbits there at all, although to-day, as the result of several good seasons, there is an odd one to be found. The proposal to spend £9,000 on the maintenance of the rabbit-proof fences represents a sinful waste of money. The only point worthy of con-

sideration is whether the State should maintain the fences for the purpose of preventing the rabbits getting back to South Australia.

Mr. Scaddan: Is it not as well to maintain the fences and prevent the rabbits getting into the magnificent pastoral areas of the goldfields?

Mr. MUNSIE: There is nothing to prevent the rabbits getting there; still the pastoralists have no fear of them. I hope the motion will be carried.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I wish to appeal to the Committee to realise that we are dealing with a very big question which requires tackling in different fashion from that proposed. There is room for close investigation as to whether the maintenance of No. 1 fence is any longer justified. Recently I visited an area between the two fences, and found that during the last six months there has been a great increase in the number of rabbits. Whether they will go on increasing remains to be seen, for in this State they do not always increase steadily in any one locality. In the Esperance district the settlers were eaten out by rabbits in one year, and in the next year there were no rabbits there at all. In any case, whether they will be as numerous next year as they are this year does not alter the fact that it is a question whether the No. 1 fence is serving any good purpose. The rabbits are between the two fences and I would protest against any interference with the No. 2 fence. This fence is serving a valuable purpose and we certainly should not interfere with it. I think, however, the Minister would be justified in closely investigating the question of abandoning the outer fence and utilising the wire in the direction of supplying it to the settlers to enable them to fence in their own holdings.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I do not like to suggest anything that may appear to be of a personal nature, but I would point out that the hon. member who has just sat down has some pastoral country on the Eastern side of the No. 1 fence and it looks as if he wanted to keep the rabbits on the Western side of the fence. It would be an advantage to him as a pastoralist to keep the rabbits on the Western side and not let them get on to

his station property. I will support the amendment. I have been convinced for some years that so far as the North is concerned the fence is absolutely useless. The Minister for Lands will find a report of mine advising that at least the Northern portion of the fence should be discontinued. The member for Roebourne says that the people of Gascoyne are paying for that fence. I am pleased to hear that. I would like some information from the Treasurer as to how much they are paying and who is paying. They borrowed the money from the Government to erect the fence, spent it right royally and then refused to pay sufficient rates.

Mr. Butcher: That is not correct.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: They refused to pay sufficient rates to make up interest and sinking fund, much less maintenance charges. Some miles of the fencing was washed down and it lay on the ground for months and the board brought in their men from the fence. We are told that if we take that fence down the areas in the North will be over-run with rabbits. By travelling through that country, I have gleaned that the rabbits do not go within 500 miles of the North coast. We have men riding up and down that fence, who are supposed to be keeping the rabbits out, but as a matter of fact they would not know a rabbit if they saw one because they have been there for many years and they have never seen one. I am speaking with some knowledge of the country. Some of our best pastoral areas are in the Eastern goldfields areas. At Sturt Meadows they are doing very well indeed out of pastoral country and that is all East of the No. 1 fence. That is country which we never think of protecting from rabbits. The experience is that the rabbits do not go so far North. This has been proved also in the Eastern part of Australia by the fact that rabbits have never been seen North of a certain locality. Therefore, to continue to spend money in maintaining the fence in Northern localities is absurd. Where the rabbits are in great numbers we cannot prevent them getting through the fence. The expenditure is nearer £15,000 than £10,000 and, in my opinion,

it is absolutely useless expenditure. My electors would be just as well off if the fence were pulled down; that would result in the saving of the cost of upkeep. Or perhaps the fence would make a first class barrier to stop tick-infested bullocks. I sincerely trust expenditure on the rabbit-proof fence will cease at the earliest possible moment. In reading the reports of the officers who are in charge of the fence, it must always be borne in mind that those officers are writing to justify their jobs. I trust the Committee will support the proposal of the member for North Perth to reduce the expenditure.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I was glad to hear the observations of the member for Guildford, who knows more about this matter than any other member of the Committee. Hon. members will, I hope, hesitate before agreeing to cut down the amount. The passing of the amendment will mean that the whole of the money spent on the fence up to date has been thrown away. When hon. members talk about doing away with the fence, they do not, I think, mean the entire abolition of the system of protection against rabbits. I have expressed the opinion that possibly the No. 1 fence might be done away with, as there seem to be more rabbits between the two fences than there are outside. The expenditure for last year was £9,890, which amount I have cut down, for this year, to £9,000. That fact, I thought, would show that I am endeavouring to economise. Believing that the No. 1 fence might be dispensed with, I had the matter thoroughly investigated: and the views expressed by hon. members to-night help me, as supporting my view. I have in my mind that the No. 1 fence would be of more service if handed over to the agriculturists for what it is worth, rather than that it should prove a source of expense in its present situation, where it is doing no good. I trust the Committee will leave the matter in my hands.

Amendment put and negatived.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*Agricultural Bank*, £16,709:

Item, Inspectors, £12,096.

Mr. MUNSIE: There is an increase of £7,633. What purpose do these additional

employees fulfil to warrant this extra expense?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY (Honorary Minister): This is brought about by the amalgamation between the Industries Assistance Board and the Agricultural Bank. The Agricultural Bank is taking over a good deal of the work of the Industries Assistance Board. Upon that amalgamation in September last 24 additional inspectors were appointed at a salary, including allowance, of £354 per annum. They are carrying out work for the Agricultural Bank, the Industries Assistance Board and the Lands Department. All these inspectors are not a true charge against the Agricultural Bank. The whole expenditure has been provided in the first instance on these Estimates, but will eventually be apportioned to the different offices I have mentioned. It is estimated that the recoup from the Board to the Lands Department will amount to £3,050, leaving a total expenditure of £4,046 upon the bank.

Item, Incidental, including postage, stationery, travelling, etc., £4,000.

Mr. MUNSIE: Last year the expenditure was £2,296, and the increase for this year is £1,704. I suppose this item is on account of the increase in numbers of employees.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY (Honorary Minister): The increase is made up as follows:—£1,300 will be recouped by the board, leaving a net increase of £404. This is due to the maintenance and upkeep of four Ford motor cars which have been purchased by the State for four district inspectors.

Vote put and passed.

Vote — *Industries Assistance Board*.  
£20,697:

Item, Incidental including rent, office cleaning, postage, stationery, travelling, etc., £4,821.

Mr. ANGWIN: This vote proves conclusively that the change brought about by the Minister has not been conducive to economy. We find the incidental vote increased, as well as extra clerical assistance.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: With greatly increased efficiency.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY (Honorary Minister): Although the Estimates show an increase it is only for the time being. There is a number of inspectors appointed on ac-

count of the different system which was inaugurated. This will enable a number of clerks to be dispensed with at the head office. Further, 15 inspectors who were put off a little time ago have had to be reinstated and their salaries have to be taken into account. There are really only six extra inspectors. It is only a matter of a book-keeping entry. It might mean an increase of £1,000, but might mean a saving of £100,000 in the assets of the board.

Vote put and passed.

This completed the Estimates of the Agricultural Department.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

### BILLS (3)—RETURNED FROM THE COUNCIL.

1. Nelson Rates Validation.
  2. Stamp Act Amendment.
  3. Roads Act Continuation.
- Without amendment.

### BILL—BETTING SUPPRESSION.

Received from the Legislation Council and read a first time.

### BILL—WHEAT MARKETING.

Returned from the Legislative Council with requested amendments.

### ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

The PREMIER (Hon. Frank Wilson -- Sussex) [11.29]: I move—

*That the House at its rising adjourn until 3 p.m. to-morrow.*

Question passed.

*House adjourned at 11.30 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

Thursday, 30th November, 1916.

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

### PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: 1, Report by the Commissioner of Police for the year ended 30th June, 1916. 2, Report of the Royal Commission on Collie Coal. 3, Annual report of the Water Supply, Sewerage, and Drainage Department.

### QUESTION—LAND ACT, ADMINISTRATION.

Hon. J. A. GREIG asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Is the Colonial Secretary aware that the Lands Department are administering Section 2, paragraph (b), of the Land Act, 1915, contrary to the spirit of the Act? 2, Will the Colonial Secretary find out which officer or officers of the department have been responsible for such administration? 3, Will the Colonial Secretary ascertain, and let the House know the opinion of the Solicitor General on this section.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, No. 2, Answered by No. 1. 3, The Solicitor General's opinion is as follows:—"The proviso to Section 2 seems to me to be quite clear. The reduction in the price of the land has effect from the commencement of the lease, but the excess in the annual rent paid prior to the reduction of price is not repaid to the lessee, but placed to his credit. The lessee has not the immediate use of this credit. He continues the payment of rent, but at the reduced rate. So soon as the price of land is paid by means of such re-