

in Western Australia have. We can understand deficits during the war, and in the exceptional circumstances that operated until the last few years, but the Estimates should be reasonably close to the anticipated expenditure, and should certainly be nearer than, as in this case, producing a deficit of £600,000. It has been stated, and no doubt we shall be reminded again of the fact, that other States have deficits. There is one State that does not have deficits and that is Victoria. To show the contemptuous manner in which they refer to places which cannot manage their finances satisfactorily, I shall read an extract from a paper.

Hon. H. Stewart: From which paper?

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: The "Australasian." It states—

With such a deplorable story being told in the monthly financial summaries from States in which the Caucus party is now, or recently was, in power, it was fitting that Victorians should be reminded that during the past three years there have been surpluses in this State, and that for five years taxation has not been increased. Unlike other States and the Commonwealth, Victoria has, under a Nationalist Ministry, been living within its income, and actually reducing its loan indebtedness. By its generally sound management of the finances, the Ministry has justified its tenure of office, and its claims are greatly strengthened by its administration generally, and by the new programme which Mr. Lawson outlined. Encouragement of country industries, economy in something more than name, the vigorous development of the Morwell scheme, soldier settlement, and improvement of the port of Melbourne are promised by a Ministry which has already proved itself by performances.

Incidentally the paper goes on to make remarks of this nature with which I do not associate myself—

Above all there will be that regard for the interests of the community as a whole that is in such marked contrast to the openly declared policy of the Caucus to wage war on the community for imagined benefits that may be gained for a class.

Hon. J. W. Hickey: That was just before the election.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: Yes. We ask the Government to try to do away with these deficits and to endeavour to see that the estimates of revenue are something like comparable with the expenditure. We cannot oppose this Bill, because we have already agreed to the Appropriation Bill embracing the estimates which anticipated the deficit, and we shall shortly be asked to agree to another such measure which anticipates a deficit of £400,000, but that is a matter to be considered at a later period. I shall have something more to say when the Appropriation Bill comes before the House.

On motion by Hon. A. Sanderson, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.34 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 27th October, 1920.

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

QUESTION—BUTTER, PRICE.

Mr. LUTHEY (for Mr. Green) asked the Premier: 1, Is it a fact that the price of Western Australian butter has been reduced recently by the Prices Regulation Commission to 2s. 8d. per lb. in the metropolitan area? 2, Has a reduction also been ordered by the Commission in the Eastern Goldfields district, and, if not, why has not the goldfields public participated in the benefit of the falling rate?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes. 2, Yes; the price of butter in the Eastern Goldfields districts has been reduced to 2s. 8d. per pound plus actual cost of transportation from metropolitan area.

QUESTION—PUBLIC SERVANTS AND TEACHERS.

Pay Deductions for Strike Period.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN (for Mr. Munsie) asked the Premier: 1, What is the total of the amounts advanced by the Government to civil servants and teachers for the period during which they were on strike? 2, At whose request were such advances made? 3, Do the Government propose to deduct these amounts from civil servants and teachers' salaries? 4, If so, will he give the following information: (a) The authority for making the deductions; (b) are deductions to be made without giving the right of appeal to the appeal board; (c) the date from which the deductions are to commence; (d) how long will the Government continue to make the deductions. 5, Is he aware that instructions have been issued to deduct 19 days'

pay, covering the period from 11th to 29th July (which includes three Sundays), from all civil servants and teachers who were on strike?

The PREMIER replied: 1, £39,754 8s. 2d. 2, It was a voluntary concession by the Government in consequence of representations made to them regarding civil servants' obligations. 3, Yes. 4, (a) It was one of the conditions of the settlement; (b) the appeal board has no jurisdiction in such matters; (c) month of October; (d) until repaid. 5, Yes; instructions were issued to deduct 19/31ths of the salary due for the month of July.

BILL—CITY OF PERTH ENDOWMENT LANDS.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. T. P. Draper—West Perth) [4.38] in moving the second reading said: This is only a short Bill to amend the present Industrial Arbitration Act in three respects. One is to complete the machinery already provided in the Act for the reference by the president of the Arbitration Court of matters upon which he has called a compulsory conference to the Industrial Arbitration Court if no agreement has been reached. The second object of the Bill, which is new matter, is to provide that a special commissioner may be appointed at any time with a view, by means of compulsory conference, to reconcile the parties to a dispute and, if he fails, to refer the matter to the court. The third matter of substance in the Bill is to increase the salaries of the representatives of the employers and of the workers in the Arbitration Court from £400 to £600 per annum.

Mr. Underwood: How do you justify that?

Mr. Lutey: The importance of their position; it is the most important job in the State.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Is any provision made for the secretary?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The first matter which I mentioned arises out of Section 58 and Section 120 of the existing Act. Section 58 creates the jurisdiction of the court, and it enacts that the court shall have jurisdiction to decide any matter which is referred to it by the president of the court after he has held a compulsory conference. Thus the jurisdiction of the court is provided. But when we come to Section 120, there is no express power given to the president at a compulsory conference to refer the matter to the court. The presidents of the court in this State have not all agreed as to whether they had power on a compulsory conference

to refer the matter to the court. It would seem as a matter of inference that they actually had the power. There has been a disagreement in some rulings which have been given, and Clause 2 of the Bill, if passed, will set the doubt at rest. The clause provides clearly that whenever a conference has been held under Section 120 and no agreement has been reached, then the president may refer the matter in dispute to the court. The second provision deals with the appointment of a special commissioner. The Minister may from time to time appoint a special commissioner.

Hon. P. Collier: It is a bit of Billy Hughes's new Bill.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It does not mean that a special commissioner is to be appointed permanently.

Hon. P. Collier: Of course not.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: But if occasion arises then the Government will have power, in the event of any dispute being likely to take place, to appoint a special commissioner to try to bring the parties together.

Mr. Pilkington: Will he be paid?

Hon. P. Collier: He will supersede the Arbitration Court for the time being.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The special commissioner would try to bring the parties together. He would compel the parties, between whom a dispute was likely to exist, to come before him.

Mr. Davies: He may be a layman?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: He may be anyone. Further, if the special commissioner cannot bring the parties together, he will have power to refer the matter to the court.

Mr. Pilkington: Is he to be a paid officer?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not suppose he will act without pay.

Hon. P. Collier: Lazarus would do it cheaply.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Lazarus would act in an honorary capacity; he is an O.R.E.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Notwithstanding the comments from members on both sides of the House, I feel sure that they are all desirous of preventing industrial disputes. If members share the view that this method will bring parties to an agreement, they must also realise that there are occasions when parties to a dispute are reluctant to go before the Arbitration Court. We need not enter into the reasons for this reluctance, but it is a fact to which we cannot shut our eyes, because it has happened. Again, very often the personality of the special commissioner may have a very good effect upon the parties to a dispute. There are some men who are naturally more qualified to bring parties together, and to put the pros and cons to them more clearly than are others. Anything which will tend to avoid industrial disputes and to reconcile the parties is, I submit, worthy of support. It is not proposed to appoint a special commissioner permanently, and therefore there

will be a certain degree of latitude as regards the appointment of some person who would be acceptable to both parties to a dispute. Having got so far, if the special commissioner fails to settle a dispute, or to bring the parties together and get them to agree, he can then refer the matter to the court, and the court can decide the question in the usual way. There are other reasons why at the present time an appointment of this nature may be extremely useful; it is not always easy to get before the Arbitration Court at a moment's notice; at some times the court is more congested than at others. Therefore I feel sure that a provision of this nature will at any rate tend towards industrial peace.

Mr. O'Loughlen: This Bill says the authority of the Arbitration Court.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not think so.

Mr. O'Loughlen: That provision is a reflection on the court.

Mr. Underwood: A reflection is perhaps required. The court has not done too well.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It is not suggested that any reflection should be cast on the court itself. I do not think any court will consider that a reflection has been cast on it merely because of the appointment of some other tribunal to assist it in its work or to obviate disputes coming before it. This is no new provision. Hon. members will find a similar provision in the New South Wales Arbitration Act; and, according to the information I have, it has worked satisfactorily in that State.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Did that provision come in simultaneously with the Act?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes. Moreover, New South Wales has the Victorian system of wages boards.

Mr. Pilkington: How is the appointment of the special commissioner limited? Is it for a fixed time, or is it for a particular dispute?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The hon. member must know that when a commissioner is appointed to settle a dispute one can hardly limit the time in which he is to settle it.

Mr. Pilkington: Then the appointment is limited to the particular matter?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes.

Mr. Pilkington: The commission will contain a limited authority?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Then how will the commissioner end his authority?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: When the dispute has been settled.

Hon. P. Collier: Or when the dispute goes on to the Arbitration Court?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes. Some hon. members seem to think this provision is not necessary.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Your intention is good, but that provision is not going to work out.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Let us try to get something that will work out for

the benefit of the State. I am prepared to adopt any means within reason to obtain industrial peace.

Mr. O'Loughlen: If the Premier asked the member for East Perth (Mr. Hardwick) to look into legal matters before they went to you, there would be trouble.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The third question arising under the Bill is simply to increase the salaries of the present lay members of the Arbitration Court. The proposal is to increase their salaries from £400 to £600 per annum.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Since you are appointing a man to take work off their shoulders, the increase is not justified.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Bearing in mind the importance of the duties they perform, and bearing in mind also what men in similar positions receive in the other States, I certainly think that, especially having regard to the high cost of living, the increase is justified. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. P. Collier debate adjourned.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1920-21.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the previous day; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair.

Department of Lands and Surveys; Hon. J. Mitchell, Minister.

Vote—Lands and Surveys, £74,366:

The PREMIER AND MINISTER FOR LANDS AND REPATRIATION (Hon. J. Mitchell—Northam) [4.53]: Hon. members will see that the expenditure of the Department of Lands and Surveys for last year exceeded the estimate by £10,000. This year an increased expenditure is provided for. I believe hon. members realise that it is necessary to expend money in order that we may settle our lands. Hon. members are aware that Parliament decided that all pastoral leaseholds should be classified. They are being classified, and this involves considerable expense. In that connection it will be observed that the expenditure for this year will be a substantial amount. The area of country to be classified is enormous—well over 200 million acres of pastoral leaseholds, in addition to land held under other conditions. The classifiers are now at work in the North-West, and by the end of the year we shall be able to appraise at least 25 million acres of that country. Hon. members know that in the meantime those pastoral leaseholders who have applied to come under the new legislation are paying double rent, and that as from the 1st October, 1918, the holders of pastoral leases must pay the rents as appraised. If the rent of a pastoral lessee has been more than doubled, he must make up the difference. It is important that the classification

should be completed and that the whole question of the renewal of pastoral leases should be dealt with, because these matters involve a considerable increase in revenue. I do not know just what the total increase will be, but it will amount to a great deal of money. In the past this State has leased lands on a flat rate, and in some districts even at a nominal rate. It is not to be expected that all the lands leased will bear a very substantial increase on the present rates, but a great deal of the area held under lease is certainly worth much more than the rents now being paid. At any rate, when the classification has been made we shall be in a position to ask for our lands whatever they are worth. Moreover, when the work of reclassification has been done we shall be in possession of a great deal of information that will be of value to the Lands Department and to the country. The work, however, cannot be done except at very great cost. Seven survey parties are now working in the field. Naturally, a surveyor cannot go alone into the country.

Hon. P. Collier: How many surveyors are engaged in classifying?

The PREMIER: There are seven parties of surveyors at work.

Hon. P. Collier: Is the classification all being done by surveyors?

The PREMIER: No. It is being done by experienced classifiers.

Hon. P. Collier: Are they pastoralists?

The PREMIER: Most of them have had pastoral experience. They have been station managers, and are accustomed to station life. Mr. Canning, the Chief Surveyor, is in charge of the whole work.

Hon. P. Collier: Is the Surveyor General a member of the Lands Reclassification Board?

The PREMIER: Yes, but he takes no part in the work of reclassification. One man cannot do more than supervise the working of the whole.

Hon. P. Collier: Does the Surveyor General visit the pastoral areas?

The PREMIER: No. He knows them well. He was over that country years ago.

Hon. P. Collier: Twenty-five years ago.

The PREMIER: It is a good many years ago. The Surveyor General must, of course, depend upon the close classification made by the men actually engaged on the work. As a fact, in this country of ours, which as everybody knows is patchy, it is necessary to have a classification before one can determine just what ought to be charged for pastoral and other lands. Then, too, we are classifying a large area of land to the east of the present settlement, from Burracoppin to Ravensthorpe, and principally, at the moment, in the southern portion of the State, where the rainfall is assured. I believe, too, that we shall get a large area of first class wheat land there. This country of Western Australia is so vast that all of it is not known even to the departmental officers.

A hundred miles out east of Wagin I recently met a man engaged in the classification of those lands, and he seems to have no doubt that we shall get a very considerable area there with an assured rainfall, land which, if it will not grow wheat, will carry stock. This work of classification will also take some time, and cost some money. During the past summer we were engaged in classifying the lands in the south-western portion of the State. There, of course, the work must be done in the summer months. The result has been far better than was anticipated. The member for Forrest (Mr. O'Loughlen) of course knows that the land in the South-West is particularly good, but he also knows that that land cannot be sold and settled. The Conservator of Forests is anxious that all the forest country there should be reserved for all time. I agree with that. The classification made by the Forestry Department has considerably helped the classification by the land inspectors. The country is very thick, and very difficult to work in; and, naturally, progress there is slow. However, the inspectors have located a large area of first class country in the South-West that can be cut into small blocks and settled. It is estimated that they have 10,000 blocks in sight now.

Mr. O'Loughlen: How far from the railway?

The PREMIER: The settlement of those blocks will necessitate the extension of the railway to Nornalup.

Mr. Pickering: What will be the average area of a block?

The PREMIER: I do not know what the average will be, but the blocks will vary from 100 acres to probably 250, and in some cases possibly more. As a matter of fact, the classification has proved that in the South-West we have land suitable for settlement where it was not anticipated that we would get such land. It is true, unfortunately, that our railways go through the worst part of the country.

Mr. O'Loughlen: It looks as if they were deliberately constructed through the poor land.

The PREMIER: It would appear as if that were so. The land in the South-West will be capable of settlement in small blocks.

Hon. P. Collier: That is an old tale.

The PREMIER: It will be a tale that the hon. member will listen to in this House for the next 20 years, because the job will not be completed even in that time.

Hon. P. Collier: You are making such little headway.

The PREMIER: We are making considerable headway. For the first time in our history we are producing enough butter for our own use.

Hon. P. Collier: But there is more coming from the wheat areas than from the South-West. We have reversed the order of things.

The PREMIER: Of course it is coming from the wheat areas, but if the member for

Bunbury were here, he would tell the leader of the Opposition that the Bunbury factory the week before last turned out six tons of butter.

Hon. P. Collier: They made seven tons in one week in one of the wheat areas.

The PREMIER: At any rate, the fact that we are now producing enough butter for our own consumption at a certain period of the year is something to be proud of. Of course a great deal of work remains to be done in the South-West and progress will be slow. That country from Pemberton to Nornalup has been proved to be better than we thought it was.

Hon. P. Collier: You are still hankering after Nornalup.

Mr. O'Loughlen: It is a good place in the summer.

The PREMIER: I am still hankering after Nornalup. I had hoped to be able to take members down to that part of the State on a visit before the end of this year, or certainly before March next.

Hon. T. Walker: You also promised to visit Esperance.

The PREMIER: I do not know about having made a promise to that effect. At any rate, I wish the House to know that a good deal of work is going on in the South-West. Leaving the South-West for a moment, we may turn to Esperance. That part of the State needs no classification because it has already been inspected and found to be uniform.

Mr. Pickering: Uniformly good.

The PREMIER: I have been assured by those who have farms there that it is good. One of the visitors from the mallee country of Victoria a little while back, after having inspected that part of the State, told me that it was as good as the land that he was farming on in Victoria, and that it was his intention to take up a block at Esperance. He wanted to be sure, however, that the railway would be built, and I told him that it would so far as I was concerned.

Hon. P. Collier: And he was a practical man, one of our good Victorian farmers.

The PREMIER: Everybody knows that I have a high opinion of this part of the State. The railway I hope will soon be started. The reports from that district are better than they used to be. Of course, hon. members would not expect me to tell the House all I have been told; I am not expressing my own opinion.

Hon. P. Collier: It took a lot of hammering from us to get our views to soak in.

The PREMIER: Yes, and sledge hammer methods were used.

Hon. P. Collier: It was more on account of the material that we had to operate on. However, we are glad of your eleventh hour conversion.

Mr. Johnston: The Premier takes a very rosy view of the project from this side of the House.

The PREMIER: The line has to be built.

Hon. P. Collier: There it is, standing still.

The PREMIER: It stood still until I returned to office and now it is my duty to see that it is started again.

Hon. T. Walker: We started it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And your Government stopped it.

Hon. P. Collier: Now you are starting it again; you are like a jibbing horse.

The PREMIER: Hon. members opposite could have done more than start the line because they occupied this bench for over five years.

Hon. T. Walker: We had to bring the Bill down three times. You opposed it.

The PREMIER: The line is to be built and the country will be opened up. Everybody knows that the member for Kanowna has interviewed somebody about this line at least once a week for years past. However, when the line is built we expect to get a sprinkling of mallee farmers from Victoria, those farmers who understand operations on this class of land. I will see that the country is given a chance just as the other parts of the State. I know it will be a source of trouble to some hon. members when the line is built. If the land is good as it is said to be, there is a vast area of it and it may be that we shall get wheat growers to take it up. The development of the agricultural lands of this great State presents problems here and there. Returning now to the South West, I desire to inform members that the work of preparing land for settlement there has been put in hand. We have had tractors engaged actively for over 12 months.

Mr. Pickering: On soldier settlements. No tractor is available for the private settler.

The PREMIER: No. There are seven tractors and we have ordered more.

Mr. Pickering: Still, you will assist others?

The PREMIER: Yes, but soldiers must have preference. If I could, I would clear a small area in each block in the South-West. We had intended preparing farms.

Hon. P. Collier: It would have been done, too, but for the National combination that turned out the Government.

The PREMIER: I want to show that there is some justification for the increased expenditure in the department. Including Esperance, the conditional purchase approvals, so far as blocks sold are concerned, increased by 1,267 in the past year. Homestead farms increased by 220, and other blocks surveyed increased from 970 to 1,597. All this has necessitated the cutting up of blocks in country towns, and we have cut up 1,064 during the year. We issued deeds to the number of 2,477 in the year 1918-19 and last year no fewer than 4,099. These figures show that there is a great deal more work to do and there must, therefore, be more settlement. The area of conditional purchase land increased from 586,190 acres to 1,414,496 acres, and other land

veyed from 463,933 to 788,357. Every acre of land costs money, but, unfortunately, we get very little revenue from any of this work. We have at the present time a number of surveyors engaged, but many have left the State and gone abroad, while others who have grown old have left the service. We have experienced a difficulty, therefore, in surveying all the lands we would have wished to survey. There is a good deal of work to be done at Esperance. There is also good land at the back of Ravensthorpe.

Hon. T. Walker: It is a continuation of the same tract of land.

The PREMIER: I hope it will prove to be so.

Hon. T. Walker: It goes to the east of where you propose to build the line.

The PREMIER: Some 90 miles from Grass Patch to Ravensthorpe. If it is as good as we hope it will prove useful. There would be no difficulty in selling 10,000 blocks if we had them surveyed, for there is a great deal of money in the hands of the farmers of the Eastern States, many of whom would be ready to come to Western Australia. But, naturally, the soldiers must have preference, and so the farmers of the East must wait. We have laid ourselves out to settle the soldiers on land in the districts from which they enlisted, and so in many instances it has been necessary to purchase land for them. However, we bought it cheaply and the men have been well placed.

Hon. P. Collier: Where would you put 12,000 immigrants per annum?

Mr. Maley: You have not done too well in the Geraldton district, have you?

The PREMIER: I do not know whether the hon. member is satisfied with what we have done. We have done the best possible. Land in the Geraldton district is very closely and firmly held.

Mr. Pickering: Some good properties up there have been offered at a reasonable price.

The PREMIER: If the hon. member thinks so, he can go to the department and see exactly what has been offered. It is true that certain land has been offered, but it is none the less true that it is difficult to get good land in that district. There are bound to be disappointments; certain districts are unavoidably disappointed. I do not know that I need to say any more in introducing these Estimates; so often have I introduced them that it seems like saying the same thing over and over again. I hope hon. members realise that we have a very great deal of land still to settle, far more than I thought 12 months ago, or even six months ago.

Hon. P. Collier: Crown land?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. Harrison: What is the cause of your amending your estimate of the area?

The PREMIER: The classification of new country. I knew 12 months ago what was then offering, but I did not then know the

land which has since been classified. No-body knew of it.

Mr. Maley: Is that out east of Lake Grace?

The PREMIER: From Woologong south. The classification will extend to the hon. member's district as soon as we can get surveyors.

Hon. P. Collier: Why not send out a prospecting party to look for surveyors?

Mr. Harrison: The knowledge of the new country has been brought about by the energies of those already in the belt.

The PREMIER: Oh, I see. I did not know there was anybody there at all. As a matter of fact, we got some little knowledge of the country from the discoverers of gold down there, who were the only people to be found from Lake Grace to Southern Cross. This country is without tracks, and very difficult to explore. The leader of the Opposition asked what we could do to settle 12,000 immigrants per annum. I never said that we could settle them. I said we could handle them.

Hon. P. Collier: What have you done with those who have arrived?

The PREMIER: I have sent a good many to the hon. member's electorate, to go mining.

Mr. Foley: I should rather see the Britishers there than the foreigners.

The PREMIER: So should I. We can easily absorb all the immigrants we may be able to get, because every industry in the State is short of men. I do not even know what is to be done in respect of the wood lines unless we get more men. I never said that we could settle a thousand British people on the land per month, but I do say we can easily absorb even more than that. I have nothing more to add. I believe the officers of the department are working well and are perfectly capable of handling the situation. It is unfortunate that the classification was not made long before. If the surveyors had been ready we could have settled a great many more soldiers on the land. In the wheat districts there will be no trouble in connection with the settlement of all that we can get. In the South-West it will be a slower business, but even there the spread of settlement will be satisfactorily rapid. We are surveying a line to connect up the Bridgetown railway with Denmark. When that survey is complete the House will be asked to authorise the construction of a line which will make possible the settlement of a very large number of people. We hope that the British people will go there. In fact they will have to go there, because the wheat land will be largely required for our own people.

Mr. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [5.23]: The Premier referred to the settlement of pastoral lands. I do not wish to traverse the whole of the ground covered on Wednesday evening, but when speaking on that motion I particularly requested the Premier to give

consideration of the proposition that the payment for improvements and compensation for disturbance should be the same whether in respect of pastoral or of agricultural lands. The Premier, in replying to the debate, said nothing whatever on that point. I should like an assurance that when the Bill is brought down that anomaly will be rectified. I do not think it is quite a fair that the anomaly should be allowed to continue. Agricultural lands can be taken up under certain conditions, but when it comes to pastoral lands the conditions are quite different.

The Premier: Not in the case of lands in the hands of the Crown.

Mr. WILLCOCK: No, but in the case of lands purchased from private owners. It has been said that the soldier could take up any land he wanted, and that the Government would purchase it for him. But in connection with pastoral lands, in addition to paying the value of the land and of the improvements, he has to pay heavy compensation for disturbance; in some cases it would amount to over £100,000. This does not apply to agricultural lands. When the Bill is introduced for the classification of pastoral lands, the opportunity might be taken to rectify that anomaly. I notice that district surveyors are being placed in different districts. One has been sent to Northam.

The Premier: He has been there for years.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Another has been sent to the South-West.

The Premier: He also has been there for years.

Mr. WILLCOCK: One is also being sent to the northern districts. I should like to know where he is going to make his headquarters, and whether one of them cannot be equipped and sent to Geraldton in order to demonstrate the value of the land in that district and expedite local business.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [5.26]: I expected that some of our Country party friends would have had something to say on these Estimates.

Mr. Harrison: We generally wait for the leader of the Opposition.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Perhaps there is some wisdom in that. I have no doubt that there will be several speakers after I have had a word or two to say. I want to refer to the classification of our pastoral areas in the North-West. The Premier states that there are approximately 200 million acres of pastoral lands to be classified, and that of that area 25 million acres—

The Premier: No, no, the 25 million acres have been appraised.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Well, it means that there are still remaining 175 million acres to be appraised.

The Premier: Yes, to be appraised, not to be classified.

Hon. P. COLLIER: A great deal of it, as the Premier said, will have to be classified before the appraisalment is made.

The Premier: The whole of the North-West has been appraised.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But this work has been going on for nearly two years. If only 25 million acres have been dealt with up to date, it really means that it will be another seven or eight years before the work is completed.

The Premier: No, you see the appraisalment follows the classification. The whole of the North-West has been appraised.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But according to the Premier's own figures, 25 million acres have been appraised, and there remain 175 million acres to be appraised. If we have only managed to go over 25 million acres in the course of two years, it will be another seven or eight years before the work is completed.

The Premier: It will be completed within the next two years.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Then, they will have to make greater headway than they have made in the past. We know that although the pastoralists are paying double rent pending the appraisalment, it is possible that the rental fixed will be even greater than the double rent they are now paying. In that case, they will benefit to the extent of the difference, so that it is to the interests of the State that the work should be completed as early as possible.

Mr. Maley: I think it is working out the other way about.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Possibly. I suppose the major portion of it will so work out.

The Premier: They have to pay from the 1st April 1918, whatever rental is fixed.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No doubt some areas will work out in the opposite direction from that which the hon. member who interjected has in mind. I am sorry the Premier has not brought down a Bill to deal with these pastoral areas. He knows that last year the House failed to rectify the grievous wrong done in 1916 to the people of this State, simply because the Bill was not introduced until the last few days of the session. That is why the position remains to-day as it has been since the Bill was passed in 1916. Once the Estimates are through, it is possible for the Government to close down when they desire, by pushing through Bills that they consider essential and discarding others they do not consider important, and we may have a repetition of what happened last year.

The Premier: Oh no, you will have the Bill.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is not an easy matter to draft a Bill dealing with this question. The Government, however, have had the whole of the recess, to say nothing of the last three or four months, in which to do so. I take it that the only reason why the Bill has not been brought down before is that it is not ready for presentation.

The Premier: It has now been finalised.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I hope the Bill will be introduced at an early stage, and that ample opportunity will be afforded to the House of dealing with it. I am afraid that matters in the meantime may have developed in some directions which may prevent the House from giving effect to the intention of Parliament in 1916. If we do so it is possible we may be bordering on confiscation, or be taking away the rights which individuals or companies have acquired during the intervening period. To that extent, our hands may be tied in dealing with the matter. I was rather surprised to read in the "West Australian" this morning, concerning the excursion train which travelled through the wheat areas on Sunday, that the Commissioner for the Wheat Belt, Mr. Sutton, in the course of a lecturette in the dining car, informed the tourists that a greater amount of butter was produced in the wheat belt than in the South-West.

The Premier: There is a larger number of farms there.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is so, but the position is altogether different from that which one has been led to expect.

Mr. Harrison: I told you that five years ago.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I had forgotten the hon. member's remarks. Possibly it was from the hon. member that Mr. Sutton received his information.

Mr. Harrison: No.

Mr. Pickering: That cannot be maintained for the whole year.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I take it Mr. Sutton was referring to a stated period, otherwise there would be no point in his informing a number of people that this was the case. He must have been referring to a period of not less than a year. This statement will come as a surprise to most people. When we have talked about the development of the South-West it has always been along the line of increasing the output of dairy produce as a result of that development. It was to the South-West we were always told to look for this phase of our production. And yet we find that the farmers in the wheat belt have been able to produce more butter than those in the South-West. Those in the wheat belt only seriously started out in the business two or three years ago, since Government assistance was granted to them in the way of butter factories. What has been done in the same direction in the South-West during the past 60 or 70 years?

The Premier: We have been putting out cows in the wheat areas during the last ten years.

Hon. P. COLLIER: And for longer than that in the South-West. I remember when the Premier was in a former Government, some 15 years ago, that he launched out in the development of the dairying industry in a portion of the South-West. Denmark is one of the places I have in mind.

The Premier: I was immortalised over that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Premier was immortalised because of the flock of goats he sent to Denmark to eat down the scrub. Although something in the way of a special effort was being made to develop the industry in that portion of the State, it may be said that development has gone on very slowly during the past ten or 12 years. The reason why the headway that we expected has not been made there, is because the necessary Government assistance has not been forthcoming. Schemes have been put forward in this House in years gone by for the assistance of those who were struggling in the heavily timbered portions of the South-West, to the end that they might increase their herds and develop the dairying industry; but these people have been left to their own resources, and as a result very little headway has been made.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Government generally bring something forward before the general elections.

The Premier: You do.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: What about the railway in the Flinders district, near Busselton? That was started a few weeks before the general elections.

The Premier: Your Government surveyed the line.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Those most concerned in this railway are the Minister for Mines and the Honorary Minister, for it will link up both constituencies.

The Minister for Mines: The two best constituencies that can be linked up!

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have heard a good deal about surveyors being here, there and everywhere surveying the land, and about the good work that is going on and is going to be done, particularly in the way of developing the South-West. This has been going on for the past 12 years, but there is very little to show for it.

Mr. Johnston: We are making four tons of butter a week at Narrogin.

Hon. P. COLLIER: And six tons a week at Bunbury. I do not know what the output is at Busselton.

Mr. Pickering: It is about ten tons a week.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Then it is time butter was getting cheaper. These hon. members must be putting on the world's parity to their product. If we are turning out butter by the ton in these important country towns, perhaps we shall soon get cheaper butter. During the past week people in this State have had to pay as high as 3s. a pound for it. In order that the price may be reasonable we must double our output at all these dairying centres.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [5.41]: It is pleasing to hear from the Premier about the development of the Esperance lands, and the classification of the country from Burracoppin southward and eastward of Lake Grace.

We have excellent timber country running north and south from Burracoppin that will be suitable for wheat growing. By the developments which have occurred in this part of the State we have been able to prove that wheat can be successfully grown there, and that wheats of different varieties can be produced that will mature earlier than other kinds and with more successful results. At the Merredin State farm recently I saw a class of wheat which was considered to be one of the earliest and best wheats yet grown, and this wheat was being brought up to the required standard. The newer varieties of wheat that are being tested are based as to their value on the standard varieties. If these newer wheats are proved to be of lesser quality and yield and slower in coming to maturity they are discarded. When we find that this sort of work is being carried out, and that our agriculturists are taking advantage of the earlier varieties of wheat, oats, and barley, it indicates that a larger area of country will be brought into production, and this will mean the better maintenance of the families engaged and an extension of farming further eastward.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Will this not bring you into still drier areas?

Mr. HARRISON: The climatic conditions of the drier areas are fairly uniform throughout. These areas, we understand, are now being properly classified. I maintain that a belt of three to five chains of native timber should be left on the north and west sides of all our farms. I feel sure that when these large areas are denuded of timber it tends to increase the evaporation and decrease the moisture that is left in the soil, owing to the force of the wind being unbroken by the timber. Evaporation and moisture are the two main factors to be considered in the cultivation of our seedlings. Further, we want shelter for our stock, and if we leave standing our indigenous timbers we prevent the grass from growing in their vicinity and this constitutes an admirable fire-break. If this timber is left in the way I suggest I am sure it will prove of advantage to the State in a few years' time. We find that the Esperance district is also going ahead in the growing of wheat. We have had the evidence of the Royal Commission on Esperance lands as to the soil and the rainfall in the district. All the circumstances point to the fact that given the necessary transport facilities the farmers in this district, and others who follow them, will be able to make a success there. If they had transport facilities they would be able to get their fertilisers out at a much cheaper rate than they can to-day. As a matter of fact they are not using fertilisers there at present, because it is almost impossible to get them. The leader of the Opposition has referred to the dairying industry. It will not be long before Western Australia is exporting butter. At present, however, it is impossible in the wheat belt to get labourers to do the work connected with dairying, and

farmers have to depend upon their families for the necessary labour.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You advocate large families.

The Premier: Do not you?

Mr. HARRISON: I stated some years ago that our wheat areas would yield a larger amount of butter in a quicker time and with less capital than the South-West would do. I do not desire to detract from the possibilities of the South-West, but undoubtedly it takes longer to get results there, because of the difficulties of clearing away the timber and the greater amount of capital required to commence operations. In the South-West a farmer cannot clear his land nearly as quickly as can the farmer in the wheat belt. Of course, when the land has been properly cleared in the South-West the farmer possesses a home that is more valuable as an asset than a similar area in the wheat belt would be. I hope that the Premier's forecast will be fulfilled, and while this particular line of development regarding our land is being followed, I trust that the surveys will be taken in hand. I hope that in addition to the surveys of the land, the surveyors will have regard to the possibilities of railway communication, and will endeavour to secure information of use to the department indicating where the best grades may be obtained.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: What is the good of building railways there for prospective settlers when you have settlers at present on the land requiring railways?

Mr. HARRISON: I said that I hoped the surveys would be made; I did not say that the railways would be built. I trust that this aspect of the work will not be lost sight of.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN (Forrest) [5.47]: Pending the primary producers marshalling their forces for an attack after tea, I wish to make a few comments on this vote. Land settlement in Western Australia, as announced by the Premier, has made phenomenal strides.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We have not got the report yet to see what has been done.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: We have been led to believe that during the past two years, at any rate, the land in Western Australia has attracted a great many people to it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And a lot of them left, don't forget.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I realise that many men who went on the land in the boom period met with bitter disappointment. Many of them were broken, and many had to leave. Many left their districts with a desire never to touch land again, but no doubt those who go on the land in the future will profit by the experience of the past. It is admitted that it was lack of experience assisted by dry seasons that drove those men off the land. It is also true that while we in Parliament may discuss the best methods of land settlement, and the promotion of land settle-

ment generally, a shower of rain will do more good to the farmers of Western Australia at the present juncture than all the speeches of members can do. Assuming that Providence will be kind to the settlers here for the next decade, with perhaps one drought or two, there is nothing to be feared on account of land settlement in Western Australia. It must be a powerful agency to bring this State through its financial difficulties. Certain things need to be taken into consideration when discussing land settlement. One has only to go through some of the districts in the Eastern States to be convinced of the possibilities ahead of the agricultural districts in Western Australia, provided the conditions and the seasons are favourable. I have several brothers farming in the Eastern States as well as in Western Australia, and if one visits the farms in the Eastern States, he can find land selling at from £7 to £8 per acre which, in my opinion, is by no means superior to land we have in Western Australia. It only shows what a big advantage we have here, and what this State can do. I refer to the Pinnaroo country in South Australia. I travelled for many hundreds of miles through it, and the bulk of the area really comprises rolling sand hills in bad seasons. Yet in that area, land has realised up to £10 in the market. Much of it changed hands at from £7 to £8. On the west coast of South Australia, the land is particularly light and cheap, and it is subject to dry periods, with uncertain rains. While we all recognise that the land here is cheap, we must admit that we have a patchy proposition as well. Nowhere is that demonstrated more than in the South-West itself. In the wheat country we have alternate belts of sand plain which mitigate against profitable occupation of many portions of our State, particularly in the eastern wheat belt. Some farmers there have been lucky enough to go in for sheep which has helped them through, but the poorer quality of soil in many places debars them from making that success which otherwise would be their lot. The clearing of land is becoming a more difficult proposition every day. I would suggest to the Premier that the trustees of the Agricultural Bank should decide upon a considerable expansion at the earliest possible moment in the direction of giving settlers larger advances for clearing their land. The amount allowed is absolutely unattractive, and no clearing would be carried out to-day if it were not for the fact that settlers are providing the clearers engaged on their land with commodities at cheap rates.

Mr. Johnston: And paying 50 per cent. more than the bank allows.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: That is true, and it is wrong that that should continue. The bank is advancing up to 30s. now.

Mr. Johnston: I believe it is 25s.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I know that a brother of mine had a contract and he was allowed £1. He is one of the best clearers in the

State, but he could not possibly make wages mainly on account of the high cost of tools and commodities.

Mr. Gardiner: You cannot get clearing done under 30s. to-day in decent timber country.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: It is impossible to look at it under that figure. I have the striking example of my own brother who, as I say, is one of the best clearers in the country, but he could not make wages out of the 400 acres he took on, with three men working with him.

Mr. Johnston: You cannot get men to take clearing contracts now.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: At any rate I put forward the suggestion that the trustees of the Agricultural Bank should be instructed to increase the amount available to farmers under this heading.

Mr. Gardiner: If that is not done, the farmers will clear the rubbish and leave the good land.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: That is the point I was coming to.

The Premier: They cannot clear anything they like, of course.

Mr. Gardiner: Along the Wongan Hills line, they cleared all the light land and left the good land.

The Premier: There is some good clearing done through there.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: At any rate, you will not get the best clearing done under present conditions. To-day the clearer who goes to the store to purchase his equipment, finds that his implements cost him three times as much as in 1914. It is an impossible proposition to get good country cleared with the advances made by the bank to-day.

The Premier: There are not the men to do it either.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I think there are the men, but the attraction is not there. I know dozens of clearers who are out on holdings working because the settlers are giving them amounts far in excess of what the bank allows, and at the same time giving them commodities at practically half cost.

Mr. Gardiner: I wanted a thousand acres cleared recently and could not get a tender for it.

The Minister for Mines: What about that now?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: It depends upon the conditions. I presume the rates for the thousand acres were attractive.

Mr. Gardiner: I called for tenders and got none.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: There is a scarcity of labour, but that is not to be overcome by the false policy pursued by the Agricultural Bank in not offering a fair amount for the work they want done. It can only lead to one result and that is that clearing operations will be curtailed and production will suffer accordingly. I believe that farming here contrasts favourably with farming in the Eastern States, provided the seasons are fairly good. The soil may not be so uni-

form here, but the difference in price more than compensates and is the attraction for settlers to come here. Many of the men who have gone on the land here have passed beyond the pioneering stage. Great difficulty however, is experienced in connection with the raising of stock and the running of sheep owing to the scarcity of wire. I think the Government might well apply themselves to this particular problem, for one of the prime necessities of the farmer is a cheap supply of wire.

Mr. Pickering: Where are you going to get it?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I believe that we can make it in Australia. I understand that a factory has been started at Lithgow, and what they can do there, we can do here, supplemented perhaps by a Government subsidy.

The Minister for Works: You cannot do that unless you have the plant, material and skilled labour.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The position is that in Australia they are making wire, but not in sufficient quantities. It would almost make one cry when going through the wheat belt to-day, to see the huge tracts of good land where grass is waving 18 inches high and going to waste because there is no stock to eat it. This position arises, of course, because wire is unprocureable at reasonable rates.

Mr. Gardiner: You cannot get the wire. You cannot buy it.

Mr. Pickering: Except at about £70 a ton.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I realise that, but the problem is serious enough to attract the Governments of Australia to undertake the manufacture of it.

Mr. Pickering: Why not put up the tariff?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: There is a great necessity for that commodity, and surely it is not beyond the States of Australia to produce fencing wire, particularly in view of what increased production would mean. The country is not carrying a quarter of the stock it should, and settlers are being handicapped all along the line.

Mr. Gardiner: You cannot put up a six wire fence at less than £60 a mile.

Mr. Pickering: That is so.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I know the position, and I know what this drawback means. I hope that whatever efforts can be put forward by the Government, in conjunction with the Federal Government, if necessary, will be done in order to get over this great difficulty.

Hon. P. Collier: What about applying to the Imperial Government as well?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: We have heard the Premier suggest new railways. I think he is treading on dangerous ground when he talks of new railways in Western Australia, particularly when we notice that to-night's "Daily News" says that there has been a loss of a quarter of a million during the last

quarter, due to the railway mileage which exists at present.

The Minister for Mines: It is not correct to say that that was the loss for the last quarter.

Mr. Johnston: You should know the "Daily News" by now.

The Minister for Works: You know who has just come back, too.

The Minister for Mines: It should be remembered that back pay under the award amounted to £96,000.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: At any rate I am showing that these figures are enormous. One of the problems confronting us is, of course, payment of the interest and sinking fund, which is so heavy. The position is difficult when we remember that the railway system is so cumbersome and that the country is grid-ironed with railways, far in advance of settlement.

The Minister for Mines: No, it is not.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The Minister knows well that his Government, when in power, Parliament, the Press and everyone were to blame, because we built too many railways.

Mr. Johnston: That is not a matter for blame: it is something to be proud of.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: It is a matter of temporary embarrassment.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The loss for three months is £204,000.

The Minister for Mines: The position is that the development of the land has not kept pace with the extension of the railways.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Quite so; we gambled on it, and bad seasons came along and the land was not developed as we expected it to be.

The Minister for Mines: You would not put a holder off if he was doing his best.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: There are not too many holders of land in the district where railways are foreshadowed to-day. The Government have their hands full without talking about authorising too many more railways. The Premier said he could build only 100 miles of railway a year.

The Premier: I said not less than 100 miles.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Where railways are authorised I hope that a complete tabulated return of the analyses of the soils will be made available. Mr. Mann has been devoting attention to this work; I have met him in the country on several occasions, but I do not know how the work is progressing. In Western Australia there are hundreds of miles of land which is so inferior that it is carrying neither stock nor people. I believe that such land is capable of being utilised for something, and the Government would be well advised to get the energies of the whole of the staff of the Department of Agriculture directed to solving this problem.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Instead of that they have been buying out the old farmers.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Many a man who takes up land sets out upon certain lines and either through lack of advice, or obstinacy, he produces crops not suited to the soil, and years of effort result in failure or necessitate an alteration of methods. The Honorary Minister had to tear up a Government orchard because he found that the die-back had attacked the trees, and that the soil was not suitable for orchard purposes.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And the Minister for Forests tore up a pine plantation.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Yes. I readily admit that, in all these matters, it is easy to be wise after the event.

Mr. Pickering: The Minister was not responsible for the planting of that forest.

The Minister for Mines: The only way to make progress is by having a failure or two.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: But we do not want too many failures.

The Minister for Mines: You may make as many analyses of the soil as you like and you will still have failures.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: That is so, but experience might prove that the soil is not always to blame. At Katanning a couple of weeks ago we saw the magnificent vineyard which was laid down by the late Mr. Piesse and sheep were being turned into it.

Mr. Pickering: That vineyard produced some of the best port wine made in Western Australia.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: With the progress of the dried fruit industry, it might have been advisable to continue that vineyard.

The Premier: No.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I do not profess to be a judge of these matters. The late Mr. Piesse evidently made a mistake, and this only goes to emphasise that new settlers are likely to make mistakes unless they are equipped with the best advice that expert opinion in the Department of Agriculture can give them.

The Minister for Works: That vineyard made rattling good wine; I know that.

Mr. Maley: The Department of Agriculture is full of experts.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The question is, are those experts delivering the goods? Soil which will grow bush timber and the various stunted varieties of vegetation such as are found between Perth and Pinjarra should be capable of growing something else which will be of commercial value.

The Honorary Minister: The man who lays down the law to-day and condemns certain country is mad.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: It is a shame to see that country, in close proximity to the metropolis and the seaport, well watered and possessing all the requisite natural conveniences and transport facilities, producing nothing—not even a kangaroo.

Mr. Troy: Do you know the idle gum lands of New Zealand?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: No.

Mr. Troy: If you did you would not speak as you are doing.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Are they valueless?

Mr. Troy: So far they are.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The fact that they are not occupied might show that they are valueless, but too many properties are considered valueless only until experience and the results of expert investigation prove otherwise.

The Honorary Minister: At one time the Stirling estate was said to be valueless.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I am asking that investigations be made to ascertain whether this land is valuable. This is the right policy, particularly when our railway metals are running through much of this land. The Premier has mentioned dairying in connection with the South-West. The fact is that dairying has not made progress in the South-West. It is making rapid strides in the eastern agricultural districts during certain periods of the year, but in a month or two the temperatures will be too high and the cream supplies will fall off. During the spring time cows will give prolific yields in almost any part of the State where the fodder is available. One district which I consider lends itself to dairying is the Geraldton district. During a visit a few weeks ago, we saw horned cattle almost covered in the wealth of lupin grass.

Mr. Gardiner: The Dongarra Flat is a suitable part.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I was impressed with the great quantity of fodder and I wondered why it could not be conserved by means of the silo system. I have since learned that this grass does not lend itself well to silo treatment, but that it is very suitable for fattening stock when in its dry state. Another district which should lend itself to dairying is Greenough. In the South-West, however, dairying is not making rapid strides because the occupation is not attractive.

The Premier: Because the people are not there.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: People are disinclined to engage in an industry which ties them up for seven days in the week. It is a rather unpleasant occupation, too—

The Premier: No, it is not.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: And many people consider that there are better openings in other industries. In Victoria dairying did not become established until Victoria was broken and poverty stricken, in fact, practically down and out. That was when the dairying industry in Victoria began to blossom. In our South-West the industry has not gone ahead, and is not likely to.

The Minister for Mines: That is no argument. A man gets his price and sells out his property.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I left my native State because life there became harder and the same thing applied to many of the Eastern States at that time. The dairying industry in the north of New South Wales and in Vic-

toria has made rapid headway. It is now well established and those engaged in it are, comparatively speaking, well off.

Mr. Gardiner: In Orroroo, the driest district in South Australia, more dairying is being carried on than elsewhere in that State.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Of course there are some favoured spots. The difficulty in Western Australia is that the land is patchy. It is impossible to get a big stretch of land of uniform quality. Take the land between Perth and Bunbury. In the Benger district there is good country and there is good land at Harvey, Waroona, and Hamel, but the rest of it is not of good quality and is carrying very few people, and I, as a South-West member, admit it. People who take up such land cannot expect to succeed. I believe that profitable use will be found for such land. Science is advancing and experts are every day giving us eye-openers with regard to what is possible in various directions, and I feel confident that something will be done with this poorer land, though perhaps not for a year or two but we must hitch our wagon to that star. Some of the areas in the South-West should be acquired. I consider that the Fouracre estate should be purchased by the Government, or that the trustees should be compelled to put it into occupation. Pinjarra should be carrying ten times its present population. The river banks contain rich fertile soil but it is held by about three settlers.

Mr. Teesdale: Tied up!

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Yes. And the Government will not impose taxation on the unimproved value in order to force it into use. Something should be done, but it will not be done because the owners of it are members of the primary producers' organisation which controls the Government. The primary producers will not support taxation of that description. Some of their members did support it, but after discussion at the recent conference the proposal was thrown out. Therefore, the three families at Pinjarra will remain in undisputed possession of some of the most fertile and best watered land of the State until the crack of doom, or until another Government come into power and force them to utilise it, sell it, or otherwise make it available. A man possessed of means came from the North-West and took up land inferior to the land of which I have just spoken. His is one of the finest properties that can be seen in a day's travel. He has spent money to develop and improve this inferior land, while other people are holding fertile land on the banks of the Murray River in idleness.

Mr. Maley: It will not pay interest on the capital invested.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Not for a time. Some of the land is inferior to land three miles away, which land is in the vicinity of Pinjarra and should be a hive of industry, but which to-day is only grazing a few sheep. The Pinjarra district should be a big dairy-

ing centre. All the natural facilities are present. We have a Government whose members boast about dairying and butter production in a certain district, and yet at the State hotel in the same district margarine instead of butter is put on the table!

The Minister for Mines: There is butter in the margarine.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: It is not butter; it is more like candle grease.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Margarine is very good stuff.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The hon. member can have it for the rest of his life for my part.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I eat it.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The general manager of the State hotels purchases this margarine at Perth for 1s. 6d. a lb. and sends it to the hotel in an agricultural district where so much is being said about butter production.

The Minister for Mines: You know that applies everywhere. In the district where stuff is produced you generally get the worst quality.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Butter is produced 14 miles away.

The Minister for Mines: Go to Mt. Barker, try to buy apples on the station and see what you get.

Mr. Maley: And try to buy our dried fruits.

The Minister for Works: You cannot deny that they send plenty of pigs away from that hotel.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: When was the Minister sent away?

The Minister for Works: You know what I mean.

The Minister for Mines: You must admit that we have increased our output.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: That might be so.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [7.30]: It appears to me that in this debate on the Lands and Surveys vote greater stress has been laid upon the question of land settlement than upon anything else. There are three great essentials to settlement in this State: one of them is men, another is land, and the third is the market. To judge from the remarks of various members, there appears to be considerable difficulty in getting suitable men. We have to-day had the assurance of the Premier, who has always been a great optimist on the subject, that there is even a greater percentage of first-class country throughout this State than anticipated by him. With regard to the market, it must be confessed that our producers have been faced with great difficulties, especially during the period of the war; and this applies more particularly to the fruitgrower. The outlook for the fruitgrower even now is not promising.

The CHAIRMAN: I will give the hon. member as much latitude as I possibly can, but the vote before the Chair refers to Lands and Surveys.

Mr. PICKERING: The question of dairying has been extensively dealt with by other members on this vote. Our producers are threatened with the risk of not getting the market value of their products, which is essential to land settlement in this State. In the past there has been great difficulty in growing potatoes and fruit at a profit. For the last year or two potatoes have brought the grower a good price, but this year he is threatened with a loss owing to the sale of inferior manures. In the fruit industry disease is threatening. Again, owing to the lack of rain, our wheat production is likely to decrease by several million bushels this season. One of our greatest difficulties in land settlement is to attract people to the land; and if the possibility of getting the fair market prices of our commodities is removed, one of the biggest factors of attraction towards land settlement will be destroyed. The substitution of any other policy for that of allowing the producer to obtain the market price of his product will be detrimental to the best interests of the State. A good deal has been said to-day about the South-West. The difficulty there, to my mind, has been the large areas taken up by the earlier settlers. I am glad to know that the Premier has referred to the advisableness of small holdings in this connection.

Mr. O'Loghlen: But he is not threatening to make the large landholders disgorge.

Mr. PICKERING: The Premier may not have enunciated a policy for breaking up large estates, but at least I feel sure that he will not in future adopt a policy favouring excessive holdings. One of the things retarding land settlement to-day, is the fear of over-capitalisation. All the essentials to settlement—wire netting, roofing iron, building materials, machinery, household requisites—have gone to abnormal prices, which cannot possibly be maintained. It would be absurd to suppose that the price of wire will be maintained at £70 per ton. The member for Forrest (Mr. O'Loghlen) drew attention to the possibility of manufacturing wire in Australia. At present the only wire obtainable in Australia, is, I believe, black wire, which is not galvanised wire. It is to be hoped that a policy of manufacturing wire and other essentials in Australia will not be adopted at the expense of the primary producer, as is the general trend of these things. If land settlement is to extend, wire, for one thing, must be made available at a much lower price than that ruling to-day. One reason for the tardiness of development in the South-West is that that district has not been a popular part of the State in the eyes of the Agricultural Bank. When I first went to the South-West, the only assistance which the Agricultural Bank would render a settler there was 50 per cent. of their valuation of his improvements. That fact deterred the people of the South-West from participating in the benefits of the Agri-

cultural Bank. The one thing that stands out pre-eminently in favour of the South-West as against any other portion of the State, is that south-western development has been accomplished without any assistance whatever from the Agricultural Bank or the Industries Assistance Board. When the boom in the wheat areas was on, the whole of the attention of the Agricultural Bank was diverted to those areas; perhaps naturally, seeing that development there was cheaper. At that time it was extremely difficult for south-western propositions to find acceptance at the hands of the Agricultural Bank. What was the consequence? The wheat districts were developed at an enormous rate, and very large areas were cleared there. One essential to successful dairying in the South-West is cleared areas of improved lands. Much of the trouble with south-western dairying is due to the fact that the cattle there are compelled to run on bush country. Dairying would not amount to much in the eastern districts if the land there were not cleared. Yet the Government, instead of offering the greatest possible inducement to the south-western people to clear their lands by allowing a fair advance through the Agricultural Bank against such work, have put every obstacle in the way. The Government rush into wild schemes in the wheat areas, such as the development of wodgil country; but as regards the South-West the Agricultural Bank have opposed its development, and opposed it consistently. Just consider the cost of clearing in the South-West as compared with the cost in the wheat areas. The member for Forrest (Mr. O'Loghlen) took a deep interest in the clearing of the wheat areas.

Mr. O'Loghlen: You give your attention to everything that is brought up in the House.

Mr. PICKERING: Why should I not? Whereas in the wheat areas clearing costs at the outside 30s. an acre, the average cost in the South-West would be £5 or £6 per acre. When contumely is cast upon the South-West because of the slowness of its development, it is up to me to show how that district has been kept back. I remember the present Premier coming to Busselton many years ago and telling us how we should clear the land.

Mr. O'Loghlen: He showed his faith in the South-West by taking up a block there.

Mr. PICKERING: Yes, and not developing it. When the tour to the South-West eventuates, I shall be able to show hon. members various properties in my district and in the Nelson electorate, which will open their eyes to a much wider extent than they were opened in the wheat areas. Whilst in consequence of the large areas cleared in the wheat belt dairying has advanced there and can be carried on profitably during part of the year. I maintain that if the same possibilities had been offered to the South-West, dairying would have greatly advanced there,

and this would pertain throughout the year. The south-western dairying industry would not be an intermittent producer.

The Premier. The South-West is the butter country, no doubt.

Mr. PICKERING: Yes. With the advent of the milking machine, one of the greatest difficulties of the dairying industry, namely, the tedious labour involved in it, has been largely overcome.

The CHAIRMAN: I fail to see any analogy between milking machines and the vote before the Chair. I must ask the hon. member to confine himself to the vote before the Chair.

Mr. PICKERING: The lands of this State in themselves are of no value, and unless we are permitted to refer to the industries which will enable our lands to be developed, it is useless to speak on this vote. If you, Sir, are going to curb me—

The CHAIRMAN: I shall certainly do so if the hon. member transgresses the rules. The hon. member must confine himself to the vote before the Chair.

Mr. PICKERING: Other members have been allowed a wider range in discussing this vote.

Mr. Hudson: That is a reflection on the Chair.

Mr. PICKERING: Perhaps I may be permitted to make some reference to the necessity for the establishment of experimental farms throughout the South-West. It is most essential in the new country that has been discovered that experiments should be made before inexperienced farmers are placed there. The member for Forrest in dealing with that aspect of the question said it was most desirable that the right crops should be grown in the right place.

Hon. P. Collier: And by the right people.

Mr. PICKERING: It is important that the proper use to which the land can be put should be ascertained as soon as possible, so that inexperienced people may not waste time in endeavouring to produce crops that are not suited to the locality. I congratulate the Premier on the steps he has taken with regard to the classification of the country, and more especially in regard to the pastoral lands of the North-West. We have heard the member for Roebourne say something about the land being tied up in the South-West, but if we can place any reliance upon the remarks of hon. members opposite as to the conditions of the North-West, then the need for readjustment is greater in the latter. I trust the classification will be made available as soon as possible, and that an adjustment will be made in accordance with it. To enable the South-West to produce all that it is capable of producing, it is necessary that one or two railways shall be built. For instance, the railway from Busselton to Margaret River should be undertaken as soon as possible.

Hon. T. Walker: What about the Esperance railway?

Mr. PICKERING: I shall be glad to see the report of the classifiers of the land alongside existing railways, and it will be satisfactory to know that the Government have decided to make it available as early as possible. This work was undertaken when Sir Henry Lefroy was Premier, but hon. members are no wiser to-day in connection with the result of that classification. I trust that when the work of classification is completed the House will receive the report, so that hon. members may get an idea of what land we do actually possess. I consider that before the Estimates of the Lands Department are considered, we should have before us the report of the Lands and Surveys Department. I do not know why it is that this has not been made available up to date. It is of great assistance to members and its distribution would enable them to better judge the work that is being carried out by the department. I hope that when the land is classified in future, fair prices will be put on it, and that we shall not afterwards be faced with the difficulty of having to reduce prices, as was done some years ago in connection with the poison and wodge lands. I hope that the classification will be on sound lines. I have discussed the various aspects of this question, but I cannot conclude without expressing the hope that the Premier will see that the scope of the Agricultural Bank is extended so that it can be made to apply to the South-West.

Hon. T. Walker. And Esperance.

Mr. PICKERING: With the assistance of the Agricultural Bank the South-West should become a great dairying centre. I regret to say that it is the habit of members representing the wheat areas to decry the South-West.

Hon. T. Walker: That is not correct.

Mr. PICKERING: It is correct. These comparisons are invidious. I take a great interest in the development of the wheat areas, and I will do all I possibly can to assist that development. I have never made a statement which can be regarded as detrimental to the wheat areas or in fact any other areas. The South-West deserves the utmost sympathy of hon. members and I trust that in the future that will be extended to it to the same degree as the members of the South-West are prepared to extend sympathy to the other parts of the State.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [7.50]: The Premier should report progress until members are presented with the reports of the departments which are under discussion. These departments control approximately seven millions of money. The Agricultural Bank itself can account for three millions, and for two years Parliament has not had a report from that institution. How does the Premier think that shareholders of a banking institution would feel if their directors neglected to present a report for two years? It is about time that the departments recognised that they

are responsible to Parliament for the expenditure of public funds and that Parliament is responsible to the people. Not only is the Agricultural Bank at fault in this direction but the Industries Assistance Board, which is responsible for the expenditure of another million and a half, has also neglected to send in a report. It is true that there was a report from the board last year, but none has come to hand this year. In my opinion hon. members are doing an injustice to the country by considering these Estimates without having before them the reports of the departments.

Mr. Harrison: Where do you get the million and a half from?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That is money loaned. The board have power to advance the money of the State, and it is due to the board to present a report annually to Parliament.

Hon. P. Collier: We have not had Public Accounts yet.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: There is nothing to show us what is being done with the State's funds. It is wrong for members to discuss the expenditure of money without having the reports of the departments before them. We are doing wrong in passing the Estimates until full information is given to the House by the various departments as to how they are dealing with the money voted to them. It seems to me we are getting very loose in our methods. It is no wonder that some anxiety is being felt throughout the State in regard to the finances. We come here year after year and discuss the expenditure of money without knowing how the departments which are entrusted with the funds are actually handling those funds. Probably those departments consider that as we have become so loose in our methods they too are justified in following our example. I trust the Premier will agree to postpone the further consideration of these Estimates until the reports are presented to us.

Hon. T. Walker: We might postpone them for 12 months.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: We should certainly have the report of the Agricultural Bank every year. If the departments were given to understand that the Estimates would not be put through until the reports were presented, they would make an endeavour to get the reports issued in time. The question is not one that we can pass over lightly. I have looked up the records but have failed to find any trace of a report of the Agricultural Bank having been presented to Parliament for two years. There was a report in 1918. We are proceeding on wrong lines, and I trust the Premier will realise the position and see that the reports are made available.

Mr. MALEY (Greenough) [7.55]: I propose to be brief in discussing the Estimates of the Lands Department, but I desire to emphasise the point made by the member

for Forrest in regard to the advances of the Agricultural Bank being altogether inadequate.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Are they advancing anything at all? We do not know; we have not had any report from them.

Mr. MALEY: I cordially agree with the hon. member in his desire to see that the reports of departments are presented to Parliament regularly each year and before the Estimates are discussed. The Agricultural Bank maintain that the cost of clearing land to-day is no higher than it has been at any time in the past four years. If the question is brought up before the officers of the bank they say that if an increase of 2s. 6d. or 5s. an acre is given in one district a cry comes immediately from another district for the same rate there. The rate, however, should be substantially increased. The maximum rate allowed at the present time is 30s. an acre, but farmers outside the Agricultural Bank cannot get the same class of land cleared for less than £2 or £2 10s. an acre. It was only this morning that I arranged a deputation to interview the manager of the bank on this question. I sincerely hope the Premier will take note of what is being said here to-night, and liberalise the advance in this direction. I suppose that on this projected tour of the South-West the Premier will have the usual assistance of the "West Australian" in spreading broadcast the impressions that will be gained by those members who will accompany him. Only a few weeks ago the Premier went out to the Lake Grace district, and "Politicians" of the "West Australian" subsequently spread himself over two or three columns describing how the Premier had discovered a new province. It is very pleasing to know that these new provinces are being discovered, for it gives us hope that, after all, we shall be able to accommodate the promised 12,000 immigrants per annum and provide them with suitable land. Yet all the reports we have here upon the land question, particularly that of the Royal Commission on Agriculture, show that there is but a disappointingly small area of first-class land still unalienated.

Hon. P. Collier: But the Premier discovered in one week-end what the Royal Commission could not discover in 12 months.

Mr. MALEY: Yet that Royal Commission made an extensive tour of the South-West. The point of their report was that the area of land still available was very small.

Hon. P. Collier: But they did not know.

Mr. MALEY: Not so long ago we had a Parliamentary expedition to the Victoria district. Unfortunately it was unaccompanied by the Premier or by anybody from the staff of the "West Australian" to give the district a boost. Yet the Premier cannot go a week-end run to the eastern wheat belt but the potentialities of the district are proclaimed from the house-tops.

The Minister for Mines: You do not object to the State being advertised, do you?

Mr. MALEY: No, but I want just as much publicity for my own district.

Hon. P. Collier: What he objects to is that his district got no advertisement when you went up there.

The Minister for Mines: That was his own fault. He made no arrangements for publicity.

Mr. MALEY: I will not say much about that trip, because it is a very sore point with the Minister.

The Minister for Mines: Yet I went to the Murchison, among my opponents, and they all treated me very decently.

Mr. MALEY: Was not the Minister treated decently in my district?

The Minister for Mines: I do not know. I remember that we were accommodated in a tin shanty where a deputation took two hours in which to say nothing.

Mr. MALEY: I am sorry that the member for Geraldton has already spoken, or he might effectively reply to the Minister.

Mr. Willecock: I do not take him seriously.

Mr. MALEY: However I am quite sure the hon. member did all that could possibly be done to render the Minister comfortable on his tour. The member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) is, I think, a little thin-skinned and apt to take offence at what is mere badinage. We all desire to see every portion of the State go ahead. None will be more pleased than the members representing the wheat belt to see the South-West come into its own.

The Minister for Mines: It will not, like an eclipse of the moon, go ahead without aid.

Mr. MALEY: I wish to strongly emphasise the point made by the member for Forrest, namely that it is necessary the Agricultural Bank should revise its policy in regard to advancing against clearing.

Mr. TROY (Mt. Magnet) [S.5]: I propose to criticise the administration of the Lands and Surveys Department controlled by the Premier. A good deal has been said in regard to the development of land settlement on sound lines. In my opinion the policy now adopted is not based on sound practical lines. The Premier referred to the wheat belt and to the necessity for developing the South-West. One of his proposals is to build a costly railway line from Bridgetown to Denmark, to open up an area of land for settlement. That is one of the aids to agricultural development which the Premier regards as practical. I do not say that it is not a practical aid, but I say that other things are required before that work is necessary. I have had occasion recently to call at the Lands Department in an endeavour to secure agricultural land for certain people in my electorate who are anxious to get away from mining and take up agriculture. I

wanted land along existing railways, but I was informed by the department that no such land was available, that all the land was taken up and that there was no room for further settlement.

The Premier: Where is that?

Mr. TROY: Along existing railways. That land may be taken up, but I am convinced that much of it is not being put to any practical use. I have noticed along the Wongan Hills railway a large area of good land which has no development whatever on it. I wonder whether the Premier is cognisant of that? The line was built seven years ago, yet two-thirds of the land along that line is not being utilised. Whilst the people of the country are groaning under the heavy burden of increased railway charges, and even the farmers themselves are saddled with those increased rates, the Lands Department, presided over by the Premier, allows such a large area of land to remain unutilised. I want to know what the Premier is going to do about it. Are we going to continue to build railways and allow the adjacent lands to be held unimproved? It is a foolish policy which results in the people being burdened with heavy charges over long lengths of railway while the land adjacent to the railway is not being put to any practical use. I cannot imagine a Government having the interests of the State at heart, overlooking this, and I cannot imagine a Minister claiming that his is the credit for the development of the land, allowing that policy to continue. It is a perfect scandal, that along existing railways such as I have mentioned, there are large tracts of available land not being put to any use. If existing holders of the land are not prepared to use it, it is up to the department to forfeit it and allow others to improve it. I am opposed to the building of the proposed line from Bridgetown to Denmark because it is not a practical proposition to-day. If the South-West is capable of all that has been claimed for it, why has its development been so tardy? We understand that the first settlement in the State took place at Augusta and afterwards extended to Busselton and Bunbury. If the land of the South-West is so valuable, how comes it that after 70 years the South-West is the most unprogressive portion of the State? Before we build a costly line down there the Premier ought to introduce some policy by which the land along existing railways shall be properly settled. A few years ago I had occasion to travel very considerably in the South-West. What struck me was that the people of the South-West had too much land. At Brunswick and along the line from Perth to Bunbury the land, instead of producing good succulent grasses and cereals and carrying large numbers of stock, is producing coarse native grasses of no use whatever for stock. One family had 3,000 acres of coarse grasses good for nothing but kangaroos.

Mr. Pickering: You cannot blame the settlers, because the Government forced that

policy on them; they encouraged men to take up too much land.

Mr. TROY: Then in the interests of the settler he ought to get rid of it. The only way to advance the South-West is to reduce the areas held and encourage a better class of cultivation. I entirely disagree with the policy which proposes to build more railways under the same old system, and on the same old principle. If that is all the premier is capable of, he is not capable of much. If the member for Sussex would speak his mind, he would agree with what I say. The settlers down there will never do any good while they are content to hold such large areas and put them to but little use.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The same thing applies to the people along the Wongan Hills line.

Mr. TROY: While they are content to graze a few cows on poor land and make a happy-go-lucky business of it they will never utilise their country properly. I saw the same thing in my youth. There were people who held large areas of land and made no use of it. They carried a few head of stock and put in a few acres of crop, and were always in debt and complaining about bad times. Now, on a tenth of the land, big families are reared and they make a fine living and put money into the bank. I admit that in the wheat areas it is essential to-day that a man should have not less than 1,000 acres.

The Premier: Yes.

Mr. TROY: He ought to have that in order to carry enough stock to stand by him when the seasons may be a failure in respect to cereal crops. The time is coming there also when the areas will be smaller, and a man will make as good a living on 800 acres as he does on 1,000 to-day. We are dealing with the conditions as they exist at present. Most settlers in the wheat areas are utilising land or rapidly bringing it into use, which previously was lying idle. When that is done no doubt the areas will be split up between their respective families.

Mr. Willecock: A man with 2,000 acres to-day is only settling about 200.

Mr. TROY: Quite correct. During the time when the member for Moore (Sir H. B. Lefroy) was Premier the Governor's Speech referred to the fact that large areas of land had been taken up, approximating about 300,000 acres in one year. We were asked to believe that this showed a vigorous land settlement policy. It showed no such thing. The same conditions largely apply to-day. Under the amending Land Act passed a few years ago provision was made that people could take up grazing leases up to 5,000 acres, and that they would be exempt from rent for five years. The result is that numbers of people who were land hungry have mopped up these areas of second and third class land. They are not paying any rent upon them and do not propose to utilise them. They are merely holding these areas for speculative purposes. I know of one settler who has a block of land

in the wheat belt; in fact he has two blocks. He has altogether too much land. He has a neighbour with a block of 900 acres, and yet he is running a line around his neighbour's block, taking up all the second class land so that the neighbour cannot get it. He will never do anything with it. When the lease lapses he will abandon it, unless he sells it in the meantime. He has taken it up merely in the hope of selling or some day acquiring his neighbour's property, because at the time he took it up the neighbour was in bad circumstances. That is not legitimate settlement. Whilst this concession on grazing leases with a five years' exemption from rent is a valuable thing in some cases, it is greatly abused in some of the wheat areas. I once had an idea that I ought to have more country. I have now come to the conclusion that if I can utilise all my land and clear it, and make the poor land suitable for the growing of oats, I will carry three times as much stock on 1,000 acres as I would on 10,000 acres of undeveloped land. That policy is not being pursued and the Lands Department is not insisting upon it, or encouraging it. The other evening the subject of the resumption of pastoral leases on the Murchison was discussed, and I regret I was not present on that occasion. I claim the privilege of discussing the matter on these Estimates, without referring to the speeches that were made. I have always held that where the State is spending money on the building of railways it should follow up the principle by making the land along the railways carry as large a population as possible. I regret that the motion moved by the member for Geraldton (Mr. Willecock) was defeated a few nights ago. After reading the speeches of hon. members, who dealt with this matter, I feel somewhat disappointed. One or two members advocated the proposition and voted against it, and others were not possessed of the knowledge they should have had before voting. I believe it was said that 300,000 acres of land are required on the Murchison before a man can make a living. The member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) said a settler there required 15,000 sheep.

Mr. Pickering: That is correct, and 200,000 acres.

Mr. TROY: If Western Australia is to be developed on these lines, God help us so far as population is concerned.

Mr. Pickering: Do you not think a man would do well on this?

Mr. TROY: Yes, but the State would do badly and the railways would not pay. I do not hold that the Murchison is either poor or rich country. It is good pastoral country, capable of carrying 20 times the population on it to-day.

Mr. Pickering: What about the rainfall?

Mr. TROY: The rainfall is not great, but it is sufficient to make that province one of the richest and most profitable in the State. The country on the Murchison would carry,

even with the small rainfall, nearly 20 times the producing population that it carries to-day. I have been informed that the Premier raised the objection that those people who live on small areas would not survive a bad season. There are people living on small areas who have done so, and not on picked areas either as has been said. They are areas that have been left by the earlier settlers, who would not have them because the land was not good enough.

The Premier: Reserves have been thrown open, too.

Mr. TROY: That is not an indication that the land is good. The department do not usually reserve good land. Some of the reserves made around the township as commonages contain land that is very stony and auriferous. Such land is not good pastoral country.

The Premier: There are good patches in it.

Mr. TROY: There were one or two good patches. The commonage around Yalgoo is one of the best pieces of land in the State and comprises about 19,000 acres, which would keep a man and his family in comfort. The other commonages are in auriferous areas where the land is not as good as in other districts. Most of the country now being held by small settlers is country which the early settlers would not take up for the reason that I have stated. Those men who have taken it up have had to do so because they could not get land elsewhere. We are told by the Premier that the people who have taken up land are making the best use of it.

The Premier: I said what they were doing, and gave the number of sheep and improvements.

Mr. TROY: They are making poor use of it. My attention has been directed to an area of 160,000 acres, which I believe is the finest pastoral country on the Murchison. It was owned by the late Mr. Pearse, and lies near Yowergabbie station. The place I refer to is not utilised. There is no stock grazing on it and the fences are down, and yet the land is held although hundreds of people are wanting it. At Yowergabbie station and parts of the Yalgoo district the rainfall is good, and there are areas of land in these localities which have never been utilised. When I made inquiries at the Lands Department as to why these leases should not be forfeited, I was informed that there was a section in the Land Act under which the improvements on the adjoining area were held to be improvements on that area. I give these facts, because it is well that they should be taken into consideration when we are discussing a question of this character. Whilst that principle obtains, the Government which allow it cannot be congratulated on carrying out a vigorous land settlement policy. It is the most incompetent policy that could be imagined. The Yower-

gabbie station is owned by a brother of the Premier.

The Premier: I do not know it.

Mr. TROY: The Premier cannot help it if his brother does own it. It will carry 10 or 20 families. I know the place. It was taken up in the early days some 24 years ago by the Watsons, who held it through droughts and good seasons. If people are willing to take the risk with 40,000 acres of this country—and I do not think there would be the slightest risk about it—it would be a good thing for the country. I am disappointed that the motion of the member for Geraldton was not carried, for I believe the policy put forward by him would have been in the best interests of Western Australia. We shall never make any progress if we continue on present lines. The goldfields' people and the farmers are burdened with heavy railway rates. The Commissioner of Railways says he cannot help it and that it is no use speaking to him, for there are thousands of miles of railways built and no settlers to make them pay. And yet the Government and Parliament, and those representatives who claim to be acting on behalf of the primary producers, allow these things to exist whereby the people are burdened to this great extent.

Mr. O'Loughlen: I wish you had been here the other night.

Mr. TROY: I do not agree with that policy and have no time for it. I would not build one mile of railway in this country in the near future, or burden it with any further liability in the matter of railway construction. Until this land along our existing railways is utilised to the full, I would build no more railways if I had my way. If the land was utilised, it would bring in a larger revenue to the railways, and we could then proceed with the building of other lines and in that way develop the State. For this reason I have refused to join the North-West Development League. I would not be associated with it. It is the most foolish and ridiculous business I have ever heard of. I do not doubt but what the Premier would be an honorary member of that league because its policy is such as he himself would pursue. Here we have a body of men advocating the construction of a railway from Meekathara to the Kimberleys at a cost of about 17 millions.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Premier would be in that all right.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Was not the leader of the Opposition on the committee as well?

Mr. TROY: If the leader of the Opposition adopts that policy, I will desert him entirely.

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

Mr. TROY: That would be a disastrous proposition for 300,000 people to take on.

The Premier: The North and South railway joining up the northern territory will be a big proposition as well.

Mr. TROY. Some of the members approached me with a view to joining the league. I informed them that I would not join but if they adopted the principle of breaking up the areas along the existing railways, I would vote for measures for further railways.

Mr. Pickering: What about the proposals we have already passed. Would you wipe them out?

Hon. P. Collier: No, not where Bills have been passed.

Mr. TROY: I am sorry that the motion moved by the member for Geraldton (Mr. Willcock) regarding the resumption of pastoral leases was not agreed to. Had it been passed, it would have been an indication that this country would be developed and people having large areas must give way to population. If a resumption of these pastoral areas is wrong, the repurchase of the Bowes estate and others which have been purchased, with the result that single pastoralists have been replaced by hundreds of settlers, was wrong. If it was a good policy to pursue in those cases, it should be a good policy in the case suggested by the member for Geraldton. I remember being taken to task by Mr. Wm. Burges, at Northampton, because I advocated breaking up these big estates. As I pointed out to him then I did not advocate the breaking up of the estates out of any desire to do him an injury but merely because the time had arrived when settlement must proceed and the land must be more productive. Those people who had taken up the areas in the early days undoubtedly experienced trying times, but they have passed beyond that stage and have reaped their reward. It was never suggested that in the resumption of these areas in order to put them to greater use the pastoralists should not have been compensated for their improvements, and I would be prepared to allow something for disturbance as well. It would be a good thing to day if we could get 20 families on to holdings which are now held by one man. I cannot support the Government in its present higgledy-piggledy policy of settling people here and settling people there, building railways for them all round the country.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You believe in settling territory discovered now, instead of opening up new territory.

The Premier: You would never have any new mines in Cornwall if you pursued that policy.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: After centuries of mining there, they are always finding new mines.

Mr. TROY: A suggestion was made tonight by the leader of the Country party that timber areas in the Wheat Belt were being rapidly destroyed and the effect of that would be injurious to the moisture retaining possibilities of the soil. We have made mistakes in the past when we settled on the land by not following out a definite policy. It has been customary to cut down

all the timber and by this means, wind breaks have been destroyed which, had these belts of timber been allowed to remain, would have kept the prevailing winds from drying up the fallowed land during the summer months. Some time ago I read an article dealing with the northern portions of Africa. It appears that during the time Rome was Empress of the world the corn producing country was North Africa. It was the granary of the world at that period, but the people cut down all the timber, with the result that the winds from the Sahara carried the sand over the fertile land and utterly destroyed it. That is what possibly may happen here.

The Premier: There is not enough sand for that.

Mr. TROY: I am not so sure of that. I have a farm and there are about 300,000 acres of sand around it. When the timber belts are cut down that sand will drift and this will happen not only there but in other portions of the State as well. I would like to see a provision made in the Land Act that settlers must leave an area of timber country on the boundaries to protect the block from the prevailing winds. Much has been said regarding the possibility of dairying in Western Australia. Western Australia has possibilities from the standpoint of dairying, but only if the people are willing. I do not acquit myself of that charge for I am not too willing to engage in dairying. Those who know what hard work dairying involves, appreciate all that it means, and the only way out that I can see is by way of milking by machinery. This may prove to be the salvation of the industry so far as Western Australia is concerned. I agree with the member for Forrest who says that Greenough is the best dairying belt in the State.

Mr. Pickering: What area is there?

Mr. TROY: It is not a very large area, but there was a time when Greenough was not producing as much as it is to-day.

Mr. O'Loughlen: It is phenomenal to-day.

Mr. Maley: There was more dairying there 30 years ago.

Mr. TROY: But there is more feed to-day and that is the experience not only in that district, but in others as well. The country is coming more under grass.

Mr. O'Loughlen: What is land at Greenough worth?

Mr. TROY: It is worth more than they can get for it.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Of course, it is.

Mr. TROY: The possibilities of the dairying industry rest with the people themselves, and if they are willing to engage in it, there is undoubtedly a future before them. The majority of farmers in this country indulge in the easier form of wheat and sheep growing rather than dairying. I believe with the member for Forrest (Mr. O'Loughlen) that the Government should adopt a definite policy in encouraging farmers to safeguard their own interests by providing summer fodder. For nine months of the year Green-

ough is a good dairying proposition with natural pasture, but for the remaining three months of the year the farmers must conserve their fodder. I think the Government might erect experimental silos to show what can be done.

The Premier: There is no such thing as an experimental silo.

Mr. TROY: That is quite true; what I mean is that by the erection of a silo in such an area, it would enable the Government to show farmers what can be done there. I read an article in the "Australasian" recently which showed that during the good seasons in Victoria one settler had conserved in a pit some hundreds of tons of fodder which otherwise would have been wasted. That foresight resulted in his being able to save the whole of his stock during the drought years. I have read frequently of the conservation of fodder by this method. Why on earth do not the Government make an experiment and show the settlers in the drier districts what can be done? If they have no officers capable of doing this work, why not import one who has the experience and can show what is possible in this direction? I do not think the Premier's optimism is all that is necessary. A practical policy is necessary, and I do not for one moment support the policy which the Premier has announced of building more railways and scattering our small population over the State and burdening the people with additional charges and additional railways. Such a policy is ridiculous. The first thing which should be done is to impose a stiff tax on the land adjacent to railways and force it into use. I wish to warn the Premier against adopting a policy which was responsible for so much resentment and which brought him into such disrepute, namely, the raising of the price of forfeited holdings. There is a tendency on the part of the Government to again raise the price of land. This policy which had to be revised by Parliament in order to relieve the settlers from the injury done by the present Premier when he was previously Minister for Lands. A returned soldier has taken up a forfeited block and has been asked to pay 50 per cent. more than was originally paid for it, and this after the States has received six years' rent for it.

The Premier: I have not heard about that. The proposal put up in this House and approved by this House would make land dearer than I made it.

Mr. TROY: The Government are not justified in claiming more for virgin country than was set on the block originally, especially after receiving six years' rent. Yet the Government are charging 50 per cent. more than the original price for this particular block. I hope the Premier will not increase the price of these forfeited areas and thus put on the new settler a burden which the old settler thought was too great.

Mr. O'Loughlen: What about the problem of the poor land?

Mr. TROY: I think the value put on poor land is too high.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Suppose the Government gave it away?

Mr. TROY: There is sandplain country in Western Australia which it would not pay any man to take up and fence because water is unprocurable on it. Its value is very doubtful indeed. I doubt whether it would have been of sufficient value to warrant fencing when fencing material was cheap. It is necessary to give large areas of that land to settlers. I would lease it to them on 21 or 30 years' term at a low rental, and let them prove it. I would rather take it up on leasehold than buy it at the price of 4s. 6d. an acre. The settler taking it up on a 21 or 30 years' lease would be able to prove to the Government what the land was worth. Let it be leased at a peppercorn rental. It is absurd to ask 4s. 6d. an acre for sandplain on which water is unprocurable, as against £1 a thousand for magnificent grazing land on the Murchison having a bountiful water supply. On the Narra Tarra estate 8s. is being asked for first class grazing land having abundance of water. I cannot understand the Lands Department. After classifying a portion of the land on the Narra Tarra estate, good grazing country with abundance of water, at 8s. an acre, there is a settler in my locality who is asked to pay 11s. 6d. an acre for a block, two-thirds of which is sandplain. I do not know who is responsible for that policy.

The Premier: It is not a matter of policy but of administration. If it is classified, the surveyor fixes the price and reports on it.

Mr. TROY: Who is the surveyor? Who reports on it?

The Premier: There are 31 surveyors.

Mr. TROY: I know one who has fixed that price. He has some far better land himself and yet he cannot make a living on it. I consider that he is not qualified to report on and fix the price of land. The Premier should introduce a policy to bring into use this poor land, such as sandplain. North of Mingnew there must be 200,000 acres of sandplain country available.

Mr. Maley: That is of value because it is adjacent to first class land.

Mr. TROY: But only that which is adjacent to first class land is of value. One thousand acres adjacent to first class land would have some value but the rest would not. If water were procurable it would have some value. I hope the Premier will introduce a policy to bring this land into use, but he can rest assured that this land will not be taken up if the present policy of the Lands Department is continued.

Mr. GRIFFITHS (York) [3.52]: I intend to touch upon only one aspect of the land question. I entirely endorse what the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) said in regard to the departmental reports. It is a farce to attempt to

intelligently consider the Estimates without having the information embodied in the reports before us.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Postpone the Estimates until we get the information.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) complained of the references made by representatives of the wheat areas to the South-West. I do not know whether there was any real intention on the part of members representing the wheat areas to disparage the South-West. We have the North-West, the North, the Kimberleys, the Great Southern, the South-West, and the wheat areas, all with merits and adapted for some particular purpose, and I think it is the aim of all members to assist in every way possible to bring those areas into their own. The member for Mt Magnet (Mr. Troy) touched on the question of poor land. This is a question which appeals to me. He pointed out that near to him there were large areas of very poor sandplain. Our light lands prevail in almost endless variety, and many of them require special study. You, Mr. Chairman, have made some study of the land in the north Ongerup district, land which is unsuitable for wheat growing. Special treatment has been accorded to that land, and I believe some settlers are making good in production other than wheat growing. The member for Greenough (Mr. Maley) pointed out that in the report of the Agricultural Commission disparaging remarks were made regarding the quality of our lands. It was said that in comparison with the Eastern States there is more light soil to develop here than there and that the problem of land settlement, therefore, needed tender handling. The Premier has recently discovered a new province. We have before us a map showing that portion of the State within what is termed Brockman's line of rainfall, which, I take it, is comparable to Goyder's line of rainfall in South Australia. Judging by this, the Premier must have discovered a new province, because this area of land within the rainfall line is of pretty wide extent. In the eastern portion of my electorate and in the neighbouring electorates there are large areas of second class country, some of which can be made to grow good crops if proper methods of cultivation are adopted. When speaking on the agricultural vote, I stressed the matter of light lands because I agree with the member for Greenough (Mr. Maley) that while there is a large area of country not yet alienated, a very great deal of it is of second class quality. Much of this land is of varying quality. Some would not be worth fencing, as the member for Mt Magnet said. But on the other hand some of the land which has been turned down by the Repatriation Department has in a period of eight years averaged over 12½ bushels to the acre, and in two of those years the crops were practically spoilt by rust, while another year proved almost a failure owing to drought. A settler on one of those areas has adopted certain methods of cultivation and,

by the growing of oats and the running of stock, he has been able to make that second class scrub country a payable proposition; in fact, he is now well on the right side of things, though he had a very hard battle at first. Still, his skill, ingenuity, and hard work have turned the land to good account and have produced wealth, whereas all round him are vast areas producing nothing but useless scrub and vermin. I trust that the Premier will do something in the way of establishing demonstration farms so that farmers themselves, who know their districts, will be enlisted in the service of the Government and, if necessary, subsidised to some extent in order to prove what the lands of these districts are capable of producing. In this way the Government could find out what the land is really adapted for growing. Finally I desire to refer to the question of utilising our second class lands. That is a question of far greater importance than hon. members perhaps realise. The estimate of the late Surveyor General, Mr. Brockman, was that in the wheat area we have 25 million acres within the boundaries of rainfall as shown on his map. The Royal Commission went into the matter very closely, and took a deal of evidence regarding it; and they came to the conclusion that the area as set out by Mr. Brockman was practically accurate. He stated that about 14 million acres of the area had already been alienated, leaving 11 million acres vacant. A large proportion of those 11 million acres, however, is inferior country, according to Mr. Brockman. First class wheat growing lands not yet alienated are rapidly becoming scarce, and therefore our enormous extent of second class country must be tackled in a proper and systematic fashion. The Royal Commission reported that one of the most urgent fields for investigation by the Department of Agriculture was the matter of soil analysis. I would add that the department should avail themselves of the knowledge of the men I have referred to, the men who have made such a success on the poor scrub country. With the aid of those men, supplemented by the investigations of soil chemists and other experts of the department, we should be able to ascertain what the land is good for, and so to bring it into the service of man. There are large areas of wodgil country on which considerable sums have been expended. Dams have been sunk there, fences put up, and dwellings erected. Surely it will be possible to find some use for that country. Then there is the morrel country, portions of which grow very fine crops. With regard to other portions, the Commissioner for the Wheat Belt thinks that as the land is worked and developed, it will come into its own, similarly to lands in the rainfall districts. I hope the Premier, in considering the question of land settlement in this State, will take to heart very seriously the problem of tackling the light lands, of which we have such great stretches

carrying nothing to-day. I am satisfied such lands will eventually yield good returns, because many men on the outskirts of those lands have made a success with sheep and oats and other fodder crops.

Mr. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [9.4]: The Minister for Lands and Repatriation should feel very gratified at the small amount of criticism which has been heard to-night on the Estimates of his important department. There is a saying that "silence gives consent," and if that saying is applied to this debate the Premier may take it that the policy he has put forward receives the endorsement of this Committee.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: What about keeping back the departmental reports?

Mr. ANGELO: The Premier is not responsible for that circumstance. There has been a public service strike. Throughout the State one may now observe a feeling of hopefulness which was not perceptible some time ago. That feeling is due in a large measure to the Premier's policy, and the good work which the hon. gentleman is doing seems to be reflected in the Honorary Minister and the staff of the Lands Department. The Premier is not a member of the Primary Producers' party, but I do not think the House contains a better Country member. The Premier recognises that this State must look to production to get it out of its financial embarrassment, and to make Western Australia one of the most important States of the Commonwealth. I have no desire to criticise these Estimates, but I want to give the Minister a word of warning as regards our pastoral leases. I refer to the encroachment of the rabbits. In the South-West most of the land is either freehold or held under conditional purchase; and therefore it is up to the owner or holder of land in the South-West to look after his own property. But the northern pastoral leaseholds belong to the Crown, although the areas may be leased for some period to the present holders. Eventually the leases will revert to the Crown, and the Crown should do its utmost to protect their value. If the rabbits get a big hold, as I am afraid they will do unless checked, then the leases, when they fall in, will not have their present value and will not produce the present rents. Three years ago anyone would have ridiculed the idea of a rabbit being seen on the Gascoyne River. To-day lads can go out from Carnarvon and get a bagful of rabbits in half a day. I consider it my duty, not only to my constituency but to the State as a whole, to utter a word of warning to the Government in connection with the rabbit invasion.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Agricultural Bank, Industries Assistance Board, Soldiers' Land Settlement, £58,062.

Item, Trustees and Board Member, £479:

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I move—

That this item be struck out.

I would have liked also to deal with the item referring to the General Manager of the Agricultural Bank; however, the present General Manager has not held the position during the whole of the year. I understand that the board of the Agricultural Bank are under the obligation of submitting an annual report to Parliament concerning their transactions. Two years have gone by since we have received a report from the Agricultural Bank.

The Premier: Are you sure about that?

[Mr. Foley took the Chair.]

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I have looked up the Votes and Proceedings for 1919, and find that they do not record a report from the Agricultural Bank. Thinking it possible that the report might have been laid on the Table in typewritten form, I referred to the record at the back of the weekly issue of "Hansard," and that record makes no reference to any report from the Agricultural Bank. This is a very serious matter. The Agricultural Bank trustees have nearly four million pounds of the people's money in their charge. The trustees are responsible to Parliament as regards that money, and Parliament is responsible to the people. Therefore it is necessary that Parliament should be informed of the transactions of the trustees. We should know whether the money placed at their disposal has been invested properly or improperly, what bad debts have accrued, and generally how the Agricultural Bank is managed; so that we in turn may be able to inform our electors. The controllers of no financial institution in the world would sit quietly by for two years without calling on those responsible for the management of the institution to report on the work they have done. As members of this Assembly, we cannot allow such neglect to continue; if we do, we shall be similarly negligent. Therefore we have no option but to pass a vote of censure on the board of the Agricultural Bank for their failure to present a report during the past two years. The only means of conveying that vote of censure is to strike off these Estimates the fees of the board. If we do not make a protest of that kind, we shall be false to the trust reposed in us. The Premier did not carry out his duty in presenting the Estimates without the reports of the various departments. In regard to the Agricultural Bank we do not know what advances have been made during the past two years, or in fact we do not know anything of the work of the department during that period.

Mr. Pilkington: When was the last report presented?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: In 1918. For two or three years it was the practice to present a typewritten report to the House. This delay is not fair to members.

Mr. Pilkington: It is not even fair to present typewritten reports.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: We cannot allow this kind of thing to pass without strong comment.

The PREMIER: I admit that the reports should be here. I have asked for this particular report several times.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The reports will be here when the Estimates are through.

The PREMIER: I do not think the reports will have any real bearing on the Estimates. At any rate, if the amount is struck out, it will have to be paid all the same as provision for the payment is made by Act of Parliament. The trustees are not responsible for the presentation of the report to the House; that is the duty of the general manager.

Mr. Munsie: Then let us deal with him, though I do not think he has occupied his present position for two years.

The PREMIER: He has been fairly busy. Of course there is no intention to suppress information.

Mr. Munsie: You are always pretty good at telling us that, but you do not give us the information we want.

The PREMIER: I wonder whether hon. members ever use these reports when they are presented. Of course I agree that the report should be here.

Mr. Munsie: We will require the Auditor General's report before we go on with the Treasury Estimates.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: If you stop their pay they will do their work.

The PREMIER: I hope the item will not be struck out.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Premier has adopted an unwise attitude in minimising the value of departmental reports. He declares that it does not matter whether reports are presented to Parliament before the close of the session or not. That attitude is only calculated to make the officers who are responsible for the delay even more lackadaisical than ever. If they get the impression that we regard the reports as of little value, and that very few members take notice of them or read them, the officials will be more likely to take the view that it does not matter whether the reports are presented or not. This year there is greater cause for complaint than in any previous year that I can remember. Fewer of the departments have presented their reports this year than in any previous year. We have not the Auditor General's report and we have no Public Accounts, and this is the first time in my experience for 15 years when the Estimates have been discussed without members being in possession of Public Accounts. The most important document presented to Parliament each year is the Public Accounts. This document has always been presented on the day on which the Budget is introduced, but this year we have not got it yet. Those accounts contain all the information one can desire in regard to the expenditure of public money during the preceding year. After

all, the information contained in the Estimates is very limited, but the Public Accounts inform us each year as to the detailed expenditure of that money. Those accounts are of the utmost value to members who take an interest in the passing of the Estimates. Of course, if the reports of the different departments are not presented to the House before the Estimates are considered, it is safe to say that members do not read them, for nobody bothers about reading a report which is out of date.

Mr. Pickering: Who is responsible for the production of those reports?

Hon. P. COLLIER: The permanent heads of departments.

Mr. Pickering: Has not the Minister any control?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Of course the Minister is really responsible.

The Premier: But we cannot get the reports.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I know that the permanent heads say that they are busy, and that the information cannot be prepared in time, but I think that is due largely to the fact that Ministers accept those explanations. It is time the officers responsible were given to understand by their ministerial heads that excuses will not be accepted. If Ministers will not take up that attitude towards the officers, it is up to this Committee to adopt that attitude towards Ministers and say that we refuse to pass the Estimates until the information we are entitled to is presented to us. In any case, no excuses for the absence of the reports are valid at this late stage of the session; indeed, no explanation has been offered for the non-appearance of those reports. One cannot over-emphasise the important work performed by the Agricultural Bank and the Industries Assistance Board. It would be idle to say that the annual report of the department would not contain information of assistance to members. The extraordinary circumstances of the establishment of the Industries Assistance Board some years ago provides a greater reason why the Committee should keep a close watch on the proceedings of the board. We should know the results of our launching out, as we did, in an entirely new sphere of operations. We should be informed as to the total amount loaned, and as to the repayments made. It is due to the taxpayers that we should know the results of the operations of the Industries Assistance Board, and this I think is the proper time at which to ask for that information.

The PREMIER: I can tell hon. members what the position was on the 8th September last. The net indebtedness of the board on the 31st March was £633,000. Of course, money has been advanced since then. The equity of the board in the Wheat Pool was £400,000. Of that we shall get £200,000 this week. There were 1,981 ordinary settlers and 497 soldier settlers under the board. Hon. members know that the advances are made against the crop, but this wheat I speak

of was in the pool, the equity of several seasons. The number of settlers under the board has been greatly reduced. There are about 1,900 now. A good many of them have had but very small grants. The board has done magnificent work, and the loss will be very little. This money is not advanced without security, because the security is the land.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: No, it is the crops. The bank has the land.

Hon. P. Collier: The security is really the season.

The PREMIER: That is so, but we have security over the land also.

Hon. P. Collier: There are the Agricultural Bank liabilities.

The PREMIER: But not to the full value of the land. There will be very little loss in connection with the board. Hon. members need not feel concerned about the amount outstanding. There has been paid in from the wheat proceeds £4,173,000. I do not expect that after this harvest the outstanding amount will total a very large sum. Of course, there is a fair amount owing to outside creditors, some £300,000.

Hon. P. Collier: Is it proposed to continue the Industries Assistance Board indefinitely?

The PREMIER: We have not taken on any new business for a very long time.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Are you taking on new business now?

Mr. Maley: Most of the new soldier settlers are coming under the board.

The PREMIER: Yes, there are about 500 of them.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: With other members, I deplore the fact that the departmental reports are not available. Previously it was customary to have reports showing the whole of the activities of the Agricultural Bank. Later on, owing to adverse seasons, it was necessary to inaugurate a new institution which has been instrumental in keeping on the land a couple of thousand settlers, the great majority of whom will make good. But we have a right to know from the Premier what percentage of failures have occurred under the Industries Assistance Board, whether the board is to be continued permanently as an institution and whether its operations are to be extended to all portions of the State. The board took on some 2,600 settlers and, of course, there was a fairly large percentage of failures. I have it from a member of the Primary Producers' Association that there are men under the board who should not be assisted any further. He expressed an unwillingness to publicly slate men whom he knew and who were perhaps supporters or even members of his own organisation. The fact remains that there are settlers who have made a welter of the Industries Assistance Board and got as much as they possibly could out of it, not thinking that they were ever going to make good and repay the money advanced to them. Some of those who to-day are in a favourable position are regretting that they got so far

into the hands of the I.A.B. in parlous times. They are bewailing the fact that they were extravagant at a time when they should have been economical. So long as the board exists and settlers are not seeking to obtain an undue advantage from it, they are doing the right thing in remaining as clients of the board. I know of one settler who is in credit to the extent of £300, and he has no desire to leave the board. The board saves the farmers a good deal in the way of book-keeping, and the inspectors give them valuable advice. Taking it bye and large it has been a wonderful institution. I want a pronouncement from the Premier as to whether it will be continued permanently.

The Premier: So far as I am concerned that will be the case.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Also, will the Premier extend the operations of the board to settlers in all parts of the State? Will he say that no partiality is shown to any particular locality?

The Premier: One cannot answer those questions in one word.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: In some cases in the South-West soldier settlers have taken on a liability which may prove too heavy for them, and there will be a percentage of failures.

The Premier: Of course there will be.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: There is no necessity for the percentage of failures to be higher than elsewhere in the State. Will those soldiers who have taken on repurchased estates, or perhaps Crown lands, be able to claim the same rights as a settler at Doodlakine or Merredin to seek assistance from the I.A.B.? Will they be able to get a daily wage from the board as sustenance while they are developing their blocks, and will they receive periodical visits and advice from the board's inspectors? Will their book-keeping arrangements be looked after by the I.A.B.? I would like the Premier to answer these questions. Will the facilities offered by the I.A.B. apply to the South-West as well as to the eastern wheat belt? If members of the Producers' party do not stand up for the South-West as they have done for the wheat belt they will be lacking in their duty. There is no settler in the South-West, either soldier or civilian, who is receiving assistance from the I.A.B.

The Premier: Oh, yes!

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: That is certainly a tribute to their enterprise and initiative, but if this department is to be continued the people in the country as a whole should receive the benefit of its operations, and no part of the State should be left out. The Premier should postpone the consideration of these Estimates until the information asked for by the member for North-East Fremantle is forthcoming. How would the Premier get on if, as chairman of the directors of a bank, he failed to bring forward the necessary facts and figures showing the operations of the bank for the preceding year? He cannot justify this laxity on the part of his officials. Most of our departments have been running

themselves of late, Ministers having devoted very little time or attention to them.

The Premier: That is not so.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I will call for a return showing the time that Ministers have been absent from the State during the past 12 months.

The Premier: And the hours that Ministers have worked.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: But not in their city offices. Only two Ministers have been attentive to their departments. The Premier cannot justify the fact that the information that we have a right to expect is not forthcoming?

The Premier: I will not attempt to do so.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Apparently the Government are not prepared to give Parliament what Parliament has a right to expect.

The Premier: Yes we are.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The Government deserve to be censured for their lack of interest in this and the Mines Department. We are not taking our business seriously. In view of the slipshod manner in which it is being transacted, the sooner this Parliament is dissolved the better it will be for the State.

The CHAIRMAN: I notice that in this division there is no vote. If there is no vote there is no item from which any reduction in the amount proposed can be made. This division consists of a number of items amounting to £58,062. This amount, however, is written off by recoups and transfers, with the result that the total of £58,062 is not included in the sum which the Committee is asked to vote. Therefore, no question can be put in connection with it. There is no question before the Committee, although a reduction has been proposed as regards the item "Trustees and board member, £479." The question that purported to be before the Chair is quite irregular, and if put and passed will have no effect on the sum to be voted by the Committee. I cannot state a sum from the Chair, and that being so, I think it just as well that the matter should be cleared up. In these circumstances I declare that the amendment moved by the member for North-East Fremantle is irregular and out of order and I cannot allow it.

Mr. Willcock: Does this ruling mean that we cannot discuss the items under this heading?

The CHAIRMAN: There must be a question before the Chair. I cannot intelligently put a total before the Committee from which no reduction can be made.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Division 17 has been put already by the Chairman (Mr. Stubbs).

The CHAIRMAN: But not by me. My ruling is that there is no total from which any reduction can be made.

Mr. WILLCOCK: In introducing these Estimates the Premier made no reference to this particular vote. I asked the Chairman of Committees (Mr. Stubbs) if this vote would be discussed and he replied in the affirmative. Are you, Mr. Foley, going to close the debate at this stage, after having

given some members latitude, and so prevent others from speaking upon it?

The CHAIRMAN: It is not my intention or desire to prevent discussion. As Chairman it is my duty to put matters before hon. members in an intelligent manner. All the time the discussion has been going on I have been getting together all the information I could, and have come to the conclusion that I have announced. Hon. members will have the fullest opportunity of discussing all the items on the Estimates.

Mr. Troy: Since there is no vote to be reduced, you are probably right in your ruling, but surely you will not carry it so far as to prohibit a discussion on this division!

The CHAIRMAN: Not at all. I think it as well to have this matter cleared up. It would be better not to discuss items if hon. members have not the power to reduce any item.

The PREMIER: We always have discussed this vote, and I welcome the fullest discussion on the present occasion. Could we not for the moment deal with the vote, ignoring the transfers?

Hon. P. Collier: Yes; otherwise all discussion could be avoided by simply balancing the Estimates each year.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: When reports are held back for two years, the officers responsible are not to be trusted.

The PREMIER: I admit that the reports should be here. However, there is a reason for last year's report not being available. The three weeks' dislocation of the public service has meant much more than three weeks' dislocation at the Government Printing Office. Some departmental reports have been in the printer's hands for a considerable time.

The CHAIRMAN: Not on account of the wish expressed by the Premier, but for the benefit of the Committee generally and so as to give every member an opportunity to discuss any item, we will take the £58,062 as representing items under Agriculture Bank, Industries Assistance Board, and Soldiers' Land Settlement.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I very much regret that the report of the Industries Assistance Board is not available. I have been closely interested in the working of the board, and the policy of the board, during the past five or six years. When the member for Canning controlled the board, he expressed the hope that within two years the board would pass out of existence.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It has no right to exist in normal times.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Hon. members will agree that the Agricultural Bank is quite capable of dealing with all matters arising out of land settlement. The financing of farmers should be done by the bank: that is one of the purposes for which the institution was established. When is some finality going to be reached regarding dividends to storekeepers who are creditors of Industries Assistance Board clients? In my

district three storekeepers have become bankrupt, or partially bankrupt, through the operations of the board. They have been striving for years to get a dividend out of the board. Some of the board's clients are in credit, and yet the storekeepers to whom they owe money are unable to obtain any payment whatever. In reply to an important deputation which waited on him a few weeks ago, the Premier said that even though clients of the board might be in credit he would not put them off the board, since he was going to retain from their credit an amount of 25s. for each acre they intended to put under crop next season, whereby they would again be in debt to the board. But that means keeping private persons out of money owing to them. It means running the country with money belonging to storekeepers. The proper policy would be, as soon as a client of the board is in credit, to get rid of his liabilities, whether to the Government or to storekeepers or to anybody else. I strongly object to the Government in any circumstances retaining money that belongs to private individuals. Constituents of mine are suffering hardship owing to the action of the Industries Assistance Board.

Mr. Maley: The board merely act as a sort of public trustee.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The board are holding back money which rightly belongs to the storekeepers, who advanced it years ago for the purpose of keeping settlers on the land. No client of the board who is in credit has any right to remain on the board; or, at all events, any money to his credit on the books of the board should be paid to his private creditors. When are the Government going to do anything by way of making a composition with those creditors? The matter has been discussed year after year. If the same action were taken in regard to these unsecured creditors as was taken in regard to the people doing big business in machinery, the position would be much better. The big machinery people were able to get their debts taken over by the State, and they were paid no less than £42,000 of public money, though on five years' terms, I understand. It may have been a good business deal for the State, as the Minister for Works has argued, but small traders should be afforded the same opportunity as big business people, to get their debts paid. From conversations I have had with storekeepers, I know that they would be prepared to accept a composition of 15s. in the pound without interest, though the amounts have been owing for years. Some such arrangement should be made in the interests of the board's clients, and in the interests of the storekeepers, and as a matter of common justice.

Mr. Pickering: I have heard it suggested that the storekeepers would take 5s. in the pound.

Hon. P. Collier: Surely we do not want to take advantage of their necessities.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Amounts paid to clients of the board for sustenance have been used to start co-operative stores, so as to down the business men who supported those clients for years and years before the establishment of the Industries Assistance Board. That is an absolute fact, and perfectly well known. I admit that the Industries Assistance Board have done good work, but this particular aspect of their operations represents an absolute scandal, and the biggest piece of financial immorality in the history of Western Australia.

Mr. Pickering: I thought you were in favour of co-operation?

Mr. WILLCOCK: I am in favour of co-operation when people put their own money into co-operative concerns. But it is absolute immorality on the part of a farmer who is on the Industries Assistance Board, and who owes money to the storekeeper, to put the sustenance allowance which he receives from the board into a co-operative store with the object of ruining the business of the man who has stuck to him for years.

The Minister for Works: But that is only an assumption.

Mr. WILLCOCK: No; it is an absolute fact. Do not members of the Country party know of members of co-operative societies who are clients of the Industries Assistance Board? Of course they do. I understand that there are many cases where the Industries Assistance Board farmers are in credit and I desire to know what amount is available for distribution to the merchants this year. According to a report regarding a deputation which waited on the Premier from the Chamber of Commerce some time ago, it was suggested that amounts would be available the following week. That has been going on ever since and so far as I am aware no payments have been made yet. The merchants naturally desire to know what the position is in order that they may make arrangements for next year. There is serious talk of direct action being taken in the direction of stopping credit.

Mr. Pickering: In what direction?

Mr. WILLCOCK: The Government can take credit for financing the agricultural industry as much as they like, but we know that financial institutions have taken a great deal of the burden on their shoulders as well. I know of one firm which had £500,000 out in one year. Other banks were also concerned in these operations.

Mr. Pickering: Do you mean that they will take direct action against their own clients?

Mr. WILLCOCK: If the country is not going to give them a fair deal, they will take this action. Some of these settlers are in credit on the board's books at the present time, and yet the Government are withholding amounts against the area under cultivation next year. If these people are in credit, why should not their money be paid to the merchants and others to whom they owe it? It was expected that pay-

ments would be made as soon as dividends on the wheat pool were made available.

[Mr. Stubbs resumed the Chair.]

The Premier: Some of the dividends have not been made available yet.

Mr. WILLCOCK: When will these amounts be made available?

The Premier: I never said they would be made available within a week or two.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I am interested in this matter because certain people have been absolutely ruined by the withholding of the amounts owing to them by Industries Board farmers. Two people are bankrupt and two other firms have called meetings of their creditors. They are likely to be shut down at any time just because the I.A.B. holds these amounts.

The Premier: That is not a fair statement.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I have made that statement before. The member for Canning (Mr. Robinson) when he was Minister said that the I.A.B. would be closed down.

Hon. P. Collier: He had a sane policy regarding the I.A.B. and said it was his intention to wind it up as soon as possible.

Mr. WILLCOCK: It is time that the board was wound up, or if it is to be kept in existence, any man whose account is in credit on the books of the board should have the amounts owing by him to merchants, paid to them.

The Premier: I suppose you would like these farmers thrown open to be attacked by everyone.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Not at all. The Agricultural Bank is the proper institution to do this business.

The Premier: The bank is doing it.

Mr. WILLCOCK: It is unnecessary to have two institutions doing the same work. There is no necessity for the continuance of the board from my point of view.

The Premier: I am glad you added that.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The board was only intended as an emergency measure.

Mr. WILLCOCK: If there had been any necessity for the board the Government would not have waited for a drought to bring it into existence. Recently tenders were called for the supplies of super through the board. Certain firms were asked to tender for supplies to the board and a number of them put in tenders. They asked for a certain amount which meant 9s. off the fixed price for super, and naturally expected to get the orders.

The Premier: The price is a fixed one, of course.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Certain firms said that they could do it if they got 9s. under the fixed price. After some time the manager of the I.A.B. said "We will only give 7s."

The Premier: I'll bet you he did not. If he did he had no right to.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Thus the clients of the board lost 2s. on each ton.

The Premier: Who told you that? You may be certain that this matter will be investigated. You have made this statement, and someone will have to answer for it.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I am not in the habit of making statements that I cannot prove.

The Premier: Will you give me the name of the man who informed you?

Mr. WILLCOCK: I will do so privately.

The Premier: I will see what all this amounts to.

Mr. WILLCOCK: You will see all about it, and know all about it, and I am wondering whether there is any ulterior motive behind it.

The Minister for Works: What motive could there be?

Mr. WILLCOCK: That is what I am wondering.

The Premier: If anyone rushes to you in the street and tells you something, you believe it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: What else can we do? We have not got the board's report.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I have been three years in Parliament, and I have not been accustomed to make careless statements. I do not make wild and silly assertions.

The Premier: You said that a firm offered to supply the super at 9s. under the fixed price, but that an official said that it would only be 7s.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I said that people who went to tender were informed by the board that if any person ordered super through any firm, they would accept a price at 7s. less than the fixed price. That is to say, they were giving the merchants 2s. back.

Mr. Teesdale: That is secret commission, if it is true.

Mr. WILLCOCK: No, it is not. They would not accept 9s. rebate, but they would allow anyone to accept 7s. There are about 60,000 tons of super used, and merchants are handling this direct; that extra 2s. would mean about £6,000.

The Premier: The I.A.B. farmers do not use the whole of that amount. They only use a portion of it.

Mr. WILLCOCK: About a third of the farmers of the State are on the I.A.B.

The Premier: No, nothing like it.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Well, say there are about 25 per cent. then. That means about 15,000 tons, and the 2s. would mean about £1,500. About 75 per cent. of the business is done by the Westralian Farmers' Ltd. I do not know if that has anything to do with it, seeing that the Country party membership is somewhat similar to that of the Westralian Farmers Ltd.

Hon. P. Collier: And the clients of the I.A.B. comprise the electors who elect the Country party members.

The Premier: This is something put up to you by the storekeepers.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I have been talking about this for years.

Mr. Pickering: Do you say that they got £1,500?

Mr. WILLCOCK: No, they would get about 75 per cent., which would mean about £1,000.

The Premier: At any rate this is a matter which must be investigated. If you had regarded it as a serious matter, you should not have waited until to-night.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I can assure the Premier that I did not find out this particular instance until to-day. I have taken the first opportunity that presented itself to bring the matter before the House.

The Minister for Works: Your assertion does not prove anything.

Mr. WILLCOCK: If I am right, or if I am wrong, I accept the responsibility for the statement which I have made.

Hon. P. Collier: And this is the proper place to make that statement.

Mr. WILLCOCK: These men can complain that they could have got the superphosphate at 2s. per ton cheaper than the price at which the board are accepting it on their behalf, so that the board are really making a present of 2s. per ton to the superphosphate merchant. This is not the first time that the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., have received preferential treatment at the hands of this House.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They point out in their own pamphlet that they got the wheat scheme through political influence.

Mr. WILLCOCK: And half the money they have received by way of commission on the wheat has been used to bolster up the losses of their co-operative stores. I protested against them getting an extra half per cent. for their agency of the State Implement Works. I merely mention this to show the preferential treatment that the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., have received.

The Minister for Works: But they did not carry out their contract.

Mr. WILLCOCK: They got an offer of an increased percentage when there was no necessity for it.

The Minister for Works: I think it was good business to offer them that half per cent.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Anyone working on a commission of 7½ per cent. on machinery sales would make as many 7½ per cents. as possible, and would not need the inducement of the extra half per cent. The Minister, however, was prepared to give them 8 per cent. I should like to know the amount of money which is available for distribution amongst these merchants and when it will be paid, so that these people may make their financial arrangements accordingly. They have been told that this money will be paid every two or three weeks. In the case of farmers in credit to the board and owing money to outside storekeepers and merchants, the money should be made available at once.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Mitchell—Norham) [10.34]: I have listened with a good deal of interest and amusement to the statements made by the member for Geraldton.

Mr. Willcock: I am glad I amused you.

The PREMIER: Members will be able to judge for themselves how far from the real truth the hon. member has been all along the line. Does the hon. member think we would or could hold money of a customer in credit with the Industries Assistance Board and who owed money to outside creditors? We are merely getting what the law of the land says we should get, and the hon. member himself, I daresay, helped to pass that law. For the last four years we have paid cash for every purchase made, and these men have been responsible for three millions of cash being paid to the merchants and storekeepers during that period. It is true that there were very large sums outstanding when the Industries Assistance Board came into operation. The total amount was £600,000. Some of the merchants have received nothing; some have had a good deal; about one-half of them have been paid.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: About one-third. You stated that £392,000 was owing.

The PREMIER: They have had a very considerable sum, and there is another dividend to be paid now. These matters, however, cannot be adjusted in a minute. There are something like 6,000 claims to be adjusted.

Mr. Willcock: And the year closed at the end of March.

The PREMIER: Doubtless the hon. member thinks that everything should have been fixed up on the 1st April.

Mr. Willcock: Seven months have elapsed and it is time someone woke up.

The PREMIER: The board have been quite as wide awake as the hon. member.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The board do not appear to have been awake, or we would have received their report.

The PREMIER: I can assure the hon. member that they have been awake.

Hon. P. Collier: Members are awake and we will remain awake until we get something from you.

The PREMIER: There are some other wheat dividends, too. I am quite aware that there are some very hard cases such as the member for Geraldton has mentioned.

Mr. Willcock: There are four cases in Geraldton of people who have been ruined by the operations of this board.

The PREMIER: Not by the operations of the board.

Mr. Willcock: Yes.

Mr. O'Loughlin: The moratorium protected the client against the merchant.

Mr. Willcock: It ruined their credit and they are absolutely insolvent.

The PREMIER: Would this money have had the effect of saving them? They would never have got half their money but for the board.

Mr. Willcock: They would have had the estate to realise on.

The PREMIER: I quite agree that the men who received assistance ought to sup-

port those who stood by them in the hour of need, so long as they could obtain their supplies at reasonable cost.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They would be black-legging; you know what Prowse said.

The PREMIER: A good many of them have stood by the men who stood by them. I do not say that when they get the cash they should stick to men who over-charged them, but they should certainly stick to the men who stood by them. Regarding the discount, members know full well that 10s. per ton. was allowed by the manufacturers of superphosphate to those who sold for them, and they also know how it is that we get 9s. a ton of that 10s.

Mr. Willcock: What are you getting superphosphate for this year?

The PREMIER: I am going to obtain the information for which the hon. member has asked.

Mr. Willcock: I should be glad to have it.

The PREMIER: We received 5s. a ton discount four years ago, and were not allowed to give it to our clients. We were told that we must not give it to the men who got the superphosphate, but that it must go to the working expenses of the department.

Hon. P. Collier: Do the agents dictate the Government policy?

The PREMIER: No, but we had the option of paying £6 5s. a ton or £6 10s. a ton which ever we pleased.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Anyhow, the struggling man was not to get the benefit. It was a pretty rotten policy.

The PREMIER: We had no control over it. We got 9s. because there was keen competition between the sellers. This year they did not accept the 9s., because they could not get it. Mr. McLarty, at the head of the bank, would accept every penny he could get.

Mr. Willcock: A tender was put in at 9s. and the superphosphate is being bought at 7s.

The PREMIER: It was said that there were so many Country party members in the Cabinet that this thing was easily arranged. I am the only Minister who knows what is happening in regard to these matters.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Then you are not responsible for the report of the Industries Assistance Board?

The PREMIER: Yes, I am responsible. It is purely a matter of business, and I am certain Mr. McLarty got all that he could get. The member for Geraldton (Mr. Willcock) has told the House that Mr. McLarty was offered a 9s. discount but refused to take any more than 7s. It is a pretty serious statement to make. We are as much entitled to the discount as are the traders who supply the phosphate.

Mr. Munzie: I take it you will have that matter looked into and will give us an explanation later on?

The PREMIER: I certainly will. If it is not as the hon. member has said, I am sure he will make the amende honourable. I believe the board has done a power of good.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And those who initiated it have had nothing but abuse. We had it from you to-night.

The PREMIER: I should be very sorry to abuse the hon. member.

Mr. O'Loughlen: They have never had credit for what they did.

Hon. P. Collier: And now hon. members on that side say, "Let us stick to the Industries Assistance Board."

The PREMIER: We ought to be able to discuss this without heat. I have said nothing whatever against those who introduced the measure. It is a very good Act, and it ought to remain on the statute-book. If it is a fact, as the member for Geraldton has said, that the operation of the Act has been disadvantageous to certain people in his electorate, I am sorry. If the people owing money to the storekeepers at Geraldton are in a position to pay, I certainly would do nothing to protect them, because every man ought to pay his just debts.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I very much regret that my amendment was ruled out of order. No doubt the deputy chairman was right. But, in reply to the Premier, I want to point out that the trustees of the bank are responsible for furnishing an annual report to the House. The Act specifically provides for that. Yet two years have elapsed since we had the last report. It is the duty of the Minister for Agriculture to see that the report is annually presented to Parliament. When I note who the Minister for Agriculture is, I do not wonder that no attention has been paid to this, for with him the finances of the country are but a secondary consideration.

The Premier: That is not fair.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Premier declared that it is not a great deal we have to consider in regard to the Industries Assistance Board. He said that up to the end of March £400,000 had been advanced, and that we were to get £200,000 of that back very shortly in respect of wheat marketed. But the Premier forgot to say that since March the whole of the crop has been financed by the board. The member for Avon asked what interest does the board pay for the money used by it, and what interest is charged to the board's clients. I find that the board had £801,633 at $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., £558,170 at $4\frac{1}{4}$ per cent., and temporary accommodation from the Treasury for which the board pays 5 per cent.

The Premier: That includes the amount for soldiers.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Section 27 of the Industries Assistance Act provides that in every year the Colonial Treasurer shall cause a report of the operations of the board to be presented to both Houses of Parliament. That is the law, notwithstanding which, although the board's year concluded in March last, we have had no report. I am tired of the taunts continually thrown across the Chamber to the effect that members on this side want to sacrifice

the farmer. When the member for Geraldton was speaking to-night the Premier said, "You want the farmer thrown over, so that everyone can get at him." I say that when the farmer requires assistance, members on this side are the first to go to his aid. We saved the country at a time when it was necessary to do so. We had no intention, however, of sacrificing other persons in the community when normal conditions again prevailed.

Mr. Harrison: That is the proper attitude to take up.

Mr. Munsie: And we were abused for our pains.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: When the necessity arises and it is in the interests of the State to do so, members on this side of the House are the first to render assistance to the farmers. We have no desire to throw over the farmer.

The Premier: I said the suggestion of the member for Geraldton meant that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: We are all one on this side. We intended to act honestly towards every portion of the community.

The Premier: And you did so.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: We provided by legislation that any surplus over from the sale of farmers' crops should be divided proportionately amongst those who had stood by the farmers. This legislation was introduced as a temporary measure to be renewed at the end of the year, if necessary. The moratorium was then brought in to protect not only the farmer but the Government. If the merchant had foreclosed on the farmer he would have taken his plant, horses, and stock, and he would not have been able to do anything with his land. During that period the Government saw to it that those traders who had supplied the farmer with necessities prior to the drought, and had in many cases been out of pocket hundreds of pounds, were not ruined because the Government controlled the position for the time being. They were given orders to continue supplying the requirements of farmers. There then came into existence a political trading concern. We have evidence from the primary producers that such was the case. Through political influence this trading organisation was built up. Instead of the practice of protecting others as well as the farmers being followed, cash payments were made, and these cash payments built up this big trading concern, whose object was to crush the very men who had stood by the farmers in the early days. Much of the money that has been put into this trading concern is money that was owing to the storekeepers who assisted the farmers. It is the duty of the Government to see that fair play is accorded to all portions of the State. Fair play is the policy of those sitting on this side of the House.

Mr. Pickering: How are you to force a man to deal where he does not want to deal?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Members say now, "God help the farmer if the Labour party comes into office." Had it not been for the Labour Government where would the farmer be to-day? The Agricultural Bank Act was brought into existence to help those farmers affected by drought and other adverse conditions. That is the source from which assistance should be rendered. What power this system places in the hands of any Government—and the power has been employed for political purposes since 1916. Any Government could use hundreds of thousands of pounds of public money for the purpose of buying electors, by way of loans.

Mr. Pickering: We never think of such a thing.

Mr. Harrison: We assisted you to draft that measure.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The measure was drafted and passed before ever there was a farmers and settlers' member in this House. Yet those members have the impudence to tell the farmers day after day what they have done for them. It is disgraceful to seek credit for work that one has not done.

Mr. Griffiths: You are barking up the wrong tree. The Country party came into this House in 1914.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Mr. Bath, who piloted the measure through the Assembly, was never in this House while farmers and settlers' members have been here. Mr. Bath took action to assist the farmers without even having legal power to do so.

Mr. Griffiths: You are talking nonsense.

Hon. P. Collier: Members of the Country party do not like the truth.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The drought occurred in 1914.

Mr. Griffiths: You are thinking of the old wheat board.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Nothing of the kind.

Hon. P. Collier: It makes one sick to listen to such piffle as the member for York talks.

The CHAIRMAN: Hon. members must keep order.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The member for York knows nothing about the subject. The Labour party came to the assistance of the farmer before they even had legal power to do so.

Hon. P. Collier: The first industries assistance measure was a validating measure.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes; and Mr. Bath was not in Parliament in 1913. The Western Australian farmer has never had better supporters than the Labour party, and yet we have had nothing but condemnation from members of the Country party, with the exception of its leader, who has acknowledged that the Labour Government helped the farming industry. I do not believe the farmers credit what has been said of us by hon. members opposite.

Mr. Pickering: Name one of those members.

Hon. P. Collier: Mr. Baxter.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes, Mr. Baxter, who got into Parliament on the back of the Labour party. I well remember when he went round fishing for the support of that party so that he might defeat Mr. Marwick. I regret exceedingly that we cannot strike out this item for the purpose of impressing on the Agricultural Bank Trustees and on the members of the Industries Assistance Board their duty to Parliament. However, we have no power to show by our votes our disapproval of their inaction. There is no institution in this country which at the present juncture calls for closer scrutiny than do the Industries Assistance Board and the Agricultural Bank; and yet we find ourselves debarred from discussing their administration. We do not know what they have done. We may believe in everything that they have done; but we are not in a position to say whether we do believe in it or not. Fancy no report being submitted to shareholders for two years! It is most discreditable.

Mr. HARRISON: It is well to remember why the board was started. The member for North-East Fremantle has made statements to-night which I resent very strongly. I believe the first assistance was rendered to farmers when the member for Toodyay, after going through his electorate in 1914 prior to the election, found women and children in distressing circumstances. Mr. Piessé laid the matter before the then Minister, Mr. Bath, and the Government gave instructions to storekeepers and guaranteed the accounts of farmers. The thing was done properly.

Mr. O'Loughlen: And without authority.

Mr. HARRISON: Yes, that is so, and within a week or 10 days the whole scheme was in operation.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The first assistance was given by the Charities Department.

Mr. HARRISON: In 1914 eight of us were elected from the country districts and a measure was approved in the first session dealing with this problem, and the then leader of the Country party, Mr. Gardiner, was responsible for a great deal in connection with what appears in the Act.

Mr. Munsie: And you were condemned by your party for voting with the Labour party in connection with that Act.

Mr. HARRISON: That measure has been of excellent service to the farmers.

Hon. P. Collier: It is a new proposition that you suggest, that members in opposition are responsible for an Act.

Mr. HARRISON: Farmers have done much for the country during the past few years in developing the agricultural areas and increasing production. It has been stated that three million pounds have been distributed through the board and that merchants have received advances on account of liabilities. The country has saved

the farmers and the farmers, under the board, have saved Western Australia.

Hon. P. COLLIER: What the hon. member has just stated has confirmed the remarks that the member for North-East Fremantle made. The member for Avon has introduced a totally new doctrine in claiming that because he was sitting in the House in opposition to the Government—and helped to turn out the Government incidentally—

Mr. Munsie: He did it the first time he got the opportunity.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is so. It is quite a new doctrine to say that because he was in the House and contributed his knowledge by way of debate on the floor of the House, he has a right to claim credit for the passage of the Bill brought forward by the Government to which he was sitting in opposition. If that suggestion be correct, I shall claim credit for every Bill introduced by the present Government where I think it suits my purposes to do so. Of course the board was created to save the farmers and improve the position so far as the country was concerned. But the member for Avon is taking up a ridiculous attitude when he assumes that the farmers are the only people who are carrying on the affairs of the State. The fact that some millions of pounds have been distributed through the board on account of the farmers has nothing to do with it. He forgets to mention that four or five millions, if not more, have been distributed by the miners of this State, and they do not talk about it. It is time that this doctrine that the farmers of this country are carrying the rest of the State on their shoulders, should be settled once and for all. The railway men who convey the farmers' goods to the seaboard are just as essential to the life of the State as the farmers who grow the produce. The storekeepers who dispose of the produce to the consumer, are equally essential as the farmers who are growing the wheat in the agricultural areas. The member for Avon wants to get that firmly fixed in his head. The farmer is essential to the national life of the State just as everyone else I have mentioned is essential. The farmer cannot get on without the man at North Fremantle who is manufacturing the ploughs that he requires, and so on right through the whole gamut. I hope we will not hear any more of this talk about the farmers carrying everyone on their shoulders. The Premier has not denied credit to the Labour Government for introducing the legislation under which the board was created. I have never heard such a miserable, wretched outburst of ingratitude as we have heard to-night from members opposite. When will they stand up with heads erect and admit that it was the Labour party who did this to help the farmer? If I were contesting the Albany seat in the interests of Labour, the position would be interesting, for the present Minister for Mines would be able to state that he was responsible to a large degree for the work of

the Labour party when they carried out this legislation in the interests of the farmers of this State.

The Minister for Works: That is a very good argument for him.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is a fact.

Mr. Harrison: In this particular measure we are discussing, I contend the farmers are the principal people affected.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member does not know what he is talking about. He does not know the Act at all. They are not the principal people by any means. If the member had read Section 24, he would know that that is so and he would then realise that he knows nothing about this subject, of which he professes to know so much. The marginal note to Section 24 of the Act reads "Power to make or guarantee advances to persons engaged in mining and other industries," showing that we were mindful of the needs of other people during the stress of war. The section reads—

(1) It shall be lawful for the Colonial Treasurer to render financial assistance by making advances or guaranteeing the repayment of advances to be made to any persons engaged in mining or any other industry, if it is proved to his satisfaction that, in the interest of the State, such assistance should be given and that it is not practicable for the applicant to obtain assistance through the ordinary financial channels.

Thus provision was made to assist any and every industry. I granted assistance to the mining industry.

Mr. Harrison: What assistance was given?

Mr. Munsie: There was little left to give other industries; the farmers got almost the lot.

Hon. P. COLLIER: First of all, the leader of the Country party says there was no power under the Act. Then he shifts his ground and says it was chiefly for the farmer. When I prove that he does not know the Act, he asks what assistance was given?

Mr. Harrison: I did not shift my ground at all? You quoted only one section of the Act.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There is just as much power in that one section as we could have granted in 5,000 sections. Could anything be more binding? The hon. member takes credit for having assisted us to pass the measure in 1915, and now he says there was not much power to assist other industries.

Mr. Harrison: You advanced £200.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is just like many of the statements which the hon. member makes. The first advance granted by me was one of £10,000 to a mine in Day Dawn. I also advanced £3,000 to the Fremantle smelters and several thousand pounds to the smelters at Ravensthorpe.

Mr. Maley: Was not that advanced under the Mining Development Act?

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, under this Act, and the Act was passed for the purpose of granting such assistance.

Mr. Munsie: And you gave a guarantee for over £12,000 to the pearling industry.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Quite so; there was no power under the Mining Development Act to render this assistance. We have now reached a stage when members are entitled to receive more information. When the member for Canning (Mr. Robinson) was responsible for the administration of this Act, he kept the House regularly posted with complete details of the operations of the Industries Assistance Board.

Mr. Pickering: Yes, he gave us tabulated statements.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He had the settlers classified under three headings.

Mr. Willcock: Good, bad, and indifferent.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That was an excellent idea because it showed members how many settlers on the board were considered to be first class, second class, or third class clients.

The Premier: That is of no use at all.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It was useful information as it gave us some idea of the value of the securities and how the money was being loaned. To-day there is not a member of the House who has the slightest knowledge of the number of clients, of the average amount loaned, or whether the securities are first class, second class, or tenth class. The member for Canning did give us useful information regarding the operations of the board.

Mr. Willcock: Every business house tabulates its clients as good, bad or indifferent.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Of course. The member for Canning gave us an estimate of the number who would be going off the board at the end of the season. When he told us that a certain percentage of the clients were first class, second class, or third class, it was merely an estimate, but it was an estimate based on investigation and reports by qualified officers, and as such it proved to be fairly reliable.

The Premier: It did not work.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No similar information is given members to-day.

Mr. Munsie: The present Premier, who was not then in office, was one of the greatest advocates of the giving of such information.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We should now be keener to obtain information regarding the operations under this Act because the measure was introduced essentially as an emergency measure. The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) made it clear that it was only to be availed of to relieve distress caused through drought or similar hardship, and that no money was to be advanced under it after March, 1916. Though it was introduced as an emergency measure, every year since we have been asked to pass a continuance or amending Bill. The very fact that it had to be re-enacted from year to year shows that it was an emergency measure, and I maintain that it ought to be regarded solely as an emergency measure. So long as I have a voice in this House I shall

protest against it becoming a permanent statute. We have the Agricultural Bank Act, which is necessary and sufficient for all ordinary requirements. If it is found to be deficient, it can be amended. Naturally and necessarily, under an emergency measure, we make provision to advance money, not with that degree of security or on the business lines which would be laid down in a permanent Act. We lay down in a permanent Act conditions which will enable us to take fair and reasonable security, but under this measure the Minister has a free hand to do as he likes. I do not suggest that anything wrong has been done, but no greater instrument than this Act could be placed in the hands of an unscrupulous Minister to bribe the electors. He could lend money and give any measure of assistance which he chose. Under political bribery or pressure from supporters, the Minister could extend the measure of assistance under this Act to an extent which would not be warranted, and to an extent which would be impossible under permanent legislation such as the Agricultural Bank Act. The Industries Assistance Act ought not to be continued. The operations of the board should be wound up as soon as possible. The very fact that men are taking advantage of it, that clients who have been assisted by the board are practically in a position of independence and yet remain under the Act, shows that the affairs of the board should be wound up at once. It was never intended that such clients should remain under the Act. It was intended that when those who received assistance had surmounted their troubles and were free to carry on operations, they should go off the funds of the Industries Assistance Board. But today all over the country settlers are deliberately remaining under the board.

Mr. Maley: If they are in credit, let the State use their money.

Hon. P. COLLIER: They ought not to remain under the board.

Mr. Maley: Why?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Because the Act was an emergency measure introduced during a time of exceptional circumstances, which circumstances no longer exist. They ought to get off the board and come under the operations of the Act which has been in existence for so many years, the Act which was passed specifically to assist them. If we experience another bad season such as that which prevailed when the Industries Assistance Act was passed, another emergency measure could be introduced. If found necessary, action could be taken as was taken by the Labour Government prior to the passing of such legislation, because this Act was really a validating Act. All the assistance granted in the bad season of 1914, especially as regards the Dowerin area, was given really without parliamentary authority. The Minister knows it was done as an administrative act by the Government, and that we trusted to Parliament to endorse our action afterwards; and so this act was passed

in 1915 validating what had been done in 1914. There is also the point of duplication in administration. We have the staff of the Industries Assistance Board conducted under a board, while the Agricultural Bank staff is run by trustees, and so the machinery is duplicated.

The Premier: No, it is all one.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The board administering the Industries Assistance Act is not composed of the same men as administer the Agricultural Bank Act. There is a duplication of machinery. I hope the Committee will be given the fullest possible information concerning the administration of this Act, under which hundreds of thousands of pounds are expended every year. I want to know what relationship exists between the Western farmers, Limited, the Primary Producers' Association, and the Government.

The Premier: There is no connection.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am inclined to agree with the member for Geraldton that when an Act has been used for the assistance of one section of the community only, and that section has special representation in the House, standing behind the Government, pressure may be brought to bear on the Government.

The Premier: It has never been done.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No. The members of that party are very modest, and do not press their claim. But it may so happen that they will in future be able to bring such political pressure on the Government as will not be fair to the rest of the community. I have seen in a pamphlet issued by the Country party the claim that the wheat board had been achieved by the political influence of the representatives of the farmers in the House. That is where I say the Industries Assistance Act is a danger, and should not be permanent.

Mr. Pickering: Was any period put to the operations of the original Act?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, the original Act, passed in March of 1915, prescribed that no assistance was to be given or money advanced after the first day of March, 1916. We have had a continuation Bill each succeeding year.

Mr. MALEY: The members for Geraldton and for Forrest stated that a number of farmers on the Industries Assistance Board were sorry to find that they had achieved success, and were in a position to get off the board.

Mr. Willecock: What I said was that they were sorry for their previous extravagance.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Sorry to find that they had taken so much from the board, which had to be repaid.

Mr. MALEY: Again, it has been said that the outside creditors of many of the board's clients were being deprived of the money due to them. The Industries Assistance Board is the nearest approach we have to public trusteeship, and in consequence members should hesitate before making such statements. As for the story that farmers receiving 9s. a day from the board were taking up shares in co-operative companies

and depriving their storekeepers of what was owing to them, I should like to know how many shares anybody on 9s. a day could hope to buy. If the political Labour party had devoted as much money to the building up of co-operative enterprises as they have put into political propaganda, the cost of living would not be as high as it is to-day.

Hon. P. Collier: Is that Industries Assistance Board money which your friends are putting into the £10,000 fighting fund?

Mr. MALEY: That £10,000 can be divided by 100, and the result will still be more than we can look for in our fighting fund. We have to rely on loyalty, without the propelling force which lies behind the political Labour party. Hon. members know what has been the main driving force behind the Labour party.

Mr. Mullany: On a point of order. Are we discussing political organisations or this particular vote?

The CHAIRMAN: I uphold the hon. member's point of order.

Mr. MALEY: I quite agree with you, Mr. Chairman. There is nothing else but a feeling of gratitude for the action that was taken during the time of adversity amongst the farmers. Every representative of the farmers is prepared to pay a full tribute to the Labour Government for the relief they afforded during that trying period. I hope the leader of the Opposition will accept my assurance that I recognise in a generous spirit the services of the Government of which he was a member towards the farming community.

Mr. FOLEY: This recognition has not always been given to the Labour Government, who in times of stress came to the assistance of the people of the State through this particular department. In 1913 the Labour Government very materially helped the agriculturists, and this was generously recognised by you, Sir, by the member for Beverley, and by the member for Moore. The leader of the Country party has quoted one member of the Chamber, and said it was primarily by his efforts that the Act under discussion was brought into existence. That hon. member was the member for Toodyay, and he had a peculiar way of expressing his gratitude on behalf of the agriculturists of the State. In 1913 that hon. member said—

Of course we hope that we will have an abundant harvest, and if there is not there will be further stagnation, and we shall suffer. To the Ministry of to-day we have little to be grateful for. I am sorry they have not realised their responsibilities. We have a large number of people in the agricultural areas in the backblocks who are in a starving condition, and no effort has been made to relieve them.

If that is what the hon. member thinks, I would sooner accept the opinion of yourself, Mr. Chairman, the member for Beverley, and the member for Moore, as to what the Government did towards assisting the farmers.

Notwithstanding the lavish expenditure in his electorate there was no stronger critic of the Labour Government than the member for Toodyay. I hope such ingratitude will never again be shown by some hon. members.

Mr. PICKERING: I regret that the return, to which reference has been made, has not been laid on the Table of the House. The Premier has stated it is intended to make the I.A.B. a permanent feature. If that is the case, and the operations of the board extend to soldier settlement, I have every right to claim that the conditions which appertain to the wheat areas should be extended to soldier settlement in the South-West. I had occasion to make application to the board for assistance for settlers in my electorate. When I did so I was informed that the conditions were such that the board did not operate there. In reading the Act, I fail to see that that interpretation is correct.

Mr. O'Loughlen: I sought assistance for the timber industry, and failed to get it.

Mr. PICKERING: The Act has always been construed against the South-West. Possibly there will be need this year for assisting the potato growers in my district, who may experience a failure of crop owing to bad manures; and in that case I shall certainly claim the benefit of the measure in their behalf. The leader of the Opposition said that the Act may lend itself to political purposes. No member on this side of the Chamber has construed the measure in that way. I regret that so much heat should have been displayed regarding the alleged ingratitude of Country members towards the Labour party. I personally have always felt gratitude towards that party for what they have done to assist the industry I represent; and I believe the same thing holds of the other members of the Country party.

Mr. Munsie: That is only lip gratitude. You turned the Labour Government out of office at the first opportunity.

Mr. PICKERING: That was a question of politics, not of gratitude.

The CHAIRMAN: The recoup and transfers by which the amount of £58,062 was wiped out having been ignored, discussion has taken place on the question "That the amount of £58,062 be agreed to." If that question is passed, an amount of £58,062 will have been voted in excess of the amount recommended by the Governor's Message. If the question is negatived, no harm will have been done, and the question will have served its purpose of making the debate on the items in order. The trouble has been caused by the way in which the Estimates have been prepared, the Treasury officials having ignored the requirements of this House. The expenditure on the staff of the Agricultural Bank should be as much under the control of the Committee of Supply as the expenditure on the rest of the public service, and the amounts should be voted in the same way. My advice to the Committee, therefore, is to negative the question before the Chair.

Item, Inspectors, £23,081:

Mr. MUNSIE: This item shows an increase of £1,955 over last year's expenditure. Last year 63 inspectors were employed. Why do not these Estimates show the number now employed? Is the increase in the item due to increase in the number of inspectors, or to increase in inspectors' salaries, or to both causes?

The PREMIER: There are about 10 or 12 more inspectors this year than there were last year. The item includes Lands, Agricultural Bank, Industries Assistance Board, and Soldier Settlement inspectors.

Vote put and negatived.

Vote — Land Settlement for Soldiers, £12,652:

The CHAIRMAN: I suggest that this vote be negatived, so that the matter may be put in order.

Vote put and negatived.

Progress reported.

BILL—HEALTH ACT CONTINUATION.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

House adjourned at 11.58 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 28th October, 1920.

Privilege: Parliamentary Allowances Bill	...	1294
Questions: Pastoral leases, rent and inspections...	...	1302
State Hotels	...	1302
Bills: Opticians Registration, 1s.	...	1302
Building Societies, report	...	1302
Coroners, com., recom.	...	1302

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

PRIVILEGE—PARLIAMENTARY ALLOWANCES BILL.

Debate resumed from previous day on the following motion by Hon. A. Lovekin—

That the words uttered by the Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom as recorded in "Hansard" on the 5th December, 1919, constitute a breach of the privilege of this House.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [4.30]: In common, I have no doubt, with most members of the House, I should very much have preferred to say nothing whatever regarding this matter, but it seems to me, as leader of the House, that the question of the privileges of members is involved and a certain responsibility rests upon me. I am sure all of us regret very much the position which has arisen. It is undoubtedly desirable and in the best interests of the country that men, elected to responsible positions such as members of this Chamber or of another place, should be men of outstanding personality and strong character. It is, I suppose, inevitable that there will be clashes between men of that kind. Because of the point of view I desire to place before the House, I think it is necessary to say at the outset that I shall endeavour to remove two misconceptions that probably may be in the minds of a number of members and certainly, in my opinion, is in the mind of the only other member who has spoken in this debate, with the exception of Mr. Lovekin and Sir Edward Wittenoom. I refer to Mr. Cornell. The first point, and it is a most important one from the view I take of the matter, is the absence from the Chamber of Mr. Lovekin. It is important, for there can be no question that had Mr. Lovekin been in the Chamber at the time, he would have had no standing at the present juncture. Whether, in spite of his absence at that time, he still has a standing in the matter, is one for the consideration of the President, rather than for an expression of opinion from any member of the House. There can be no question that had Mr. Lovekin been in the House at the time, his remedy would have been immediate and if not availed of at once, could not have been taken at any future time. Mr. Cornell quoted from "Hansard" to show that Mr. Lovekin was in the House both before and subsequent to the incident. That is quite correct, but I know that at the time the statement was made, Mr. Lovekin was in the corridor and I also was absent from the House for a moment or two. Although I was constant in my attendance during the day, I was absent at that particular juncture; and Mr. Lovekin was in the Chamber for the greater part of the evening, but it was peculiarly unfortunate that he was temporarily absent from his place in the Chamber at that particular moment. The other point raised was that if Mr. Lovekin had nothing whatever to do with the writing or inspiring of the article in the "Daily News," he was, by virtue of his position as proprietor or manager, responsible for what was done by one of his employees. I put this point of view before hon. members for their consideration: Had the same article appeared in some other paper, with which no member of this Chamber was connected, they could not have taken any notice of it. I want members to understand