

position is as it at present remains, that difficulty will always obtrude itself. Just one other point, and that is the question dealt with in Clause 109 as to the sale of rabbits. This is not as clear as it might be and I should like the assurance of the Government as far as the Eastern goldfields are concerned, that the people there will be permitted still to trade in rabbits as is done at present. This was mentioned when the Bill was before the House last session. I do not know if Clause 109 makes provision for this. I want the Minister to make it quite clear whether it will be permissible to trade in rabbits in the Eastern Goldfields districts. I understand the Government are anxious to get this Bill through. I heartily support it and I would not have spoken only for the urgency of the matters I have mentioned. I quite understand exception is taken to the Bill in places because it has to provide for the whole State, and we have to deal with conditions that are very diverse. I believe the Bill is framed, although it does not say so, to deal with the agricultural areas only. I understand the difficulty of those engaged in pastoral pursuits and they recognise the anomalies. The Bill has been drafted having in view the pest on the eastern belt. For that reason, leaving out the pastoral portion, it will be imperative that the Bill should be immediately dealt with. I hope the measure will be passed without undue delay because it is necessary to tackle the problem this summer. Although the rabbit question may be dealt with in the winter time and has been effectual where a determined effort has been made in winter, if we are really to do anything in the nature of extermination or keeping the rabbits within bounds, we must get to work in dead earnest this summer and with the shortest possible delay put the Bill into operation.

On motion by Hon. E. M. Clarke debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 7.44 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 17th October, 1918.

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

[For "Questions on Notice" and "Papers Presented" see "Votes and Proceedings."]

BILL—FORESTS.

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read, recommending appropriation in connection with the Bill.

QUESTION—ROYAL COMMISSION PERENJORI AND KULIN HOTEL LICENSES.

Hon. P. COLLIER (without notice) asked the Premier: Will the Government consider the advisability of appointing a solicitor to assist the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the Perenjori and Kulin hotel licenses? I do not wish to make any remarks, but in the past in connection with Royal Commissions, the Nevanas among others, it has been found necessary that someone should undertake the preparation of the evidence necessary to be called, it not being accepted as the function or duty of a judge of the Supreme Court to act as counsel in the case. Will the Government consider the advisability of rendering assistance of that nature to the judge in the present instance?

The PREMIER replied: A judge of the Supreme Court has been appointed as a Royal Commissioner to go into these matters. The Government were asked to appoint a Royal Commission, and it is for the Royal Commissioner to say whether he requires any assistance. If the case cannot be conducted without legal assistance, and if application for such assistance is made by the Royal Commissioner, the Government will be very pleased to consider the application. The Government have not yet had any suggestion to that effect from the Royal Commissioner.

Hon. P. Collier: Governments have given such assistance in the past without any suggestion.

QUESTION—ORDERS OF THE DAY, NOTIFICATION.

Mr. H. ROBINSON (without notice) asked the Premier: Will the Premier be good enough to make public through the columns of the morning newspapers the Orders of the Day with which the Government intend to proceed on each sitting day?

The PREMIER replied: The columns of the public Press are not the property of the Government. The Press can publish the Orders of the Day if they so desire. No doubt, if the hon. member approaches the Press on the subject, his wishes will be acceded to. I am not in a position to bring pressure to bear on the Press in this regard.

BILL—DISCHARGED SOLDIERS' SETTLEMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 8th October.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [4.41]: There is not one member of this House, I am sure, but is possessed with a desire to see this Bill passed through Parliament in a form which will render the utmost possible assistance to our returned soldiers, whom it is designed to help. But whatever views members may take of the merits of the Bill, it will be generally conceded that the appearance of the measure here is of a somewhat belated character, in view of the fact that we have now been four years at war and that for more than three

years our soldiers have been returning, to the number now, I think, of about 7,000. It is surprising that legislation of this nature, if it is necessary, and apparently it has been found so, has not made its appearance before Parliament at an earlier date. There can be no doubt that the Governments of the various Australian States are fully seized of the necessity and value to their respective States of settling as many as possible of the returned soldiers on the land. I suppose Western Australia, having regard to the fact that we still have vast areas awaiting settlement, will have more to gain from settling large numbers, if possible, of returned soldiers upon the land than even our neighbours in the East, whose lands are more closely occupied than ours are. While that is so, I do not know that the outlook for those who may go upon the land, or indeed for those who are already settled upon the land, is at all too bright at the present time. Our citizens who have been engaged in farming and agricultural pursuits during the past few years have had perhaps the most trying time in their experience, and perhaps a severer time than the settlers in any other State of the Commonwealth have had for many years past. That being so, it is easy to understand that the prospects are not very encouraging to the returned soldiers. However that may be, it is certainly the duty of Parliament and of the people of this country to do their very utmost for at any rate that section of our returned men who do desire to engage in farming or agricultural pursuits. I rather regret that the question of settlement of returned soldiers upon the pastoral areas of this State has not received that prominence which I think ought to have been given to it both in this House and outside. For, certainly, the results which have been obtained by men engaged in pastoral pursuits during the past few years, largely of course on account of the war, have been such as to offer every encouragement for what I might describe as the closer settlement of our pastoral areas. As we know, Western Australia has immense areas of pastoral country, stretching from the Murchison right up to the north-west coast. But unfortunately—and I say “unfortunately” from the point of view of settlement—that pastoral country is held in very large holdings indeed. I do not profess to be an authority upon matters appertaining to sheep raising and to our pastoral lands generally, but from what I have been told by those who ought to know, there is great scope for much increased settlement in our pastoral areas, in that the holdings might be considerably reduced, to the general benefit of those in possession of the land as well as of the State generally. Because, with this question is wrapped up that of the population of the State, of the settlement at any rate of those vast empty spaces. And, having regard also to the fact that only the year before last an amending Land Bill was passed which perpetuated the existing condition of things in regard to our pastoral lands, there seems very little prospect indeed

of settling any considerable number of our returned soldiers on those areas. Whilst on this subject I would like to say that, so far as I can learn, the view that Parliament took in the passing of that amending Land Bill, in regard to the area that might be held by individual holders, the intention appears to have been defeated, or there seems to be a weakness somewhere in the Act which we were not aware of when it was passing through this Chamber. It will be remembered that the object was to limit the area held by any one person to a million acres. In the case of a man and his wife, I believe, that might be extended to two million acres.

The Premier: No, the Act distinctly provides against that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: For the purpose of my argument it does not matter. I understand, however, that it is open to the holders of land of a greater area than a million acres to form companies.

The Premier: No.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): You must hold no interest in land outside your own land.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have been told that as a matter of fact companies have been formed since the passage of the Bill, which enables the shareholders to hold areas greatly in excess of what it was intended they should hold. I am glad to learn from the Ministers that this is not so, because if it were found that there was a weakness in the Act in that respect it would be the imperative duty of the Government to bring down amending legislation.

Hon. J. Mitchell: One can drive a coach and four through the Act.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No doubt, through all Acts, and particularly through Acts dealing with land legislation.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): And especially Acts passed by the Government of which the member for Northam was a member.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know that, because if there is any loop-hole in an Act, Parliament has to share the responsibility equally with the Minister who introduced the measure. However, I am glad to learn that my information in regard to the area to be held is not correct. The Bill might be divided into two parts, namely, that which deals with the main principles, and those provisions which deal mainly with administration. When one examines the policy in the Bill, it is found that the concessions which it is proposed to confer on soldier settlers, as compared with the ordinary settler, are not very great. They are limited, I believe, to four or five items. First of all, the price of conditional purchase lands will be to the soldier settler only one half what it is to the ordinary settler. That, of course, is a considerable concession, but I do not know that it goes as far as the Bill might be expected to go. After all, I am coming to the conclusion that it matters very little to the State whether we get any purchase money at all for our agricul-

tural land, having regard to the great obstacles and difficulties which face the people who endeavour to clear and cultivate and develop our farming lands, and having regard also to the general advantage which accrues to the community as the result of the labours of those people. In view of this I say it would be a good business proposition, from the State's point of view, if the land were given away, with no purchase price at all. In this connection it is proposed to give the soldier settler an advantage of half the purchase money. I think the House might well consider whether we ought not to extend that condition still further. Another concession to the soldier settler is to be that the payment of purchase money will not commence until five years after the issue of the lease. That should be of considerable assistance in that if the land has been utilised for five years the holder will be in a better position to make his payments than he would be at an earlier period. It is also proposed to have the interest payable by the settler commence at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. for the first year and increase by one half per cent. each year until the full interest payments have been reached. That, of course, will be of considerable advantage to those concerned.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That means $10\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. or 11 per cent. on repurchased estates.

Hon. P. COLLIER: In regard to pastoral leases that may be acquired under the measure, the rent will be deferred for a period of five years. These are the only concessions offered to the soldier settlers as against the ordinary conditions of settlement enjoyed by our farmers to-day. I find, too, that the holders of conditional purchase lands who were holders of conditional purchase lands at the time of enlistment will pay only half the balance of purchase money. I do not think this provision goes far enough. Any man who had been settled on conditional purchase lands for a number of years before enlisting may have paid half, or a considerable portion, of the purchase money. Under the Bill he will get relief to the extent of half the balance owing. It appears to me that provision ought to extend to one-half the total purchase money of that property. That is to say, if we calculate the whole of the purchase money on the same terms as we extend to the new soldier settler—that is, at half the price—and if it is found under that calculation that he has already paid the full amount, he ought not to be called upon to pay even half the balance owing. Many of those who left our agricultural areas have made great sacrifices indeed in going to the war. It would be invidious to draw comparisons between sacrifices made by different sections of our citizens who have gone to the war, but if one might make a comparison at all it could be shown that many who have spent years in bringing their holdings to the profit-earning stage, those men, by enlisting and leaving their holdings more or less neglected during their absence, have made perhaps greater sacrifices than many of those who left other callings to go to the war. If

there is any man who is deserving of generous treatment it is the man whom I have just indicated. The Bill does not go far enough in this connection. That man ought to get the benefit of the half purchase price right over the whole purchase period of his holding, which is the same as the new settler will get who takes up land after the Bill shall have passed.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): What would you do with a man who has been paying for 15 years?

Hon. P. COLLIER: You mean one who has overpaid the half? I do not think a refund should be made, but where there is a balance still owing I think such a man ought to get the full benefit of that half purchase price, the same as the new settler. I hope the House will take that view of it. Those are the only concessions I have been able to discover in the Bill. In regard to the machinery clauses, which deal mainly with administration, I think there will be much room for difference of opinion. My view is that those provisions are entirely unsatisfactory, and I hope they will be radically amended in Committee. In this respect the Bill provides for all the dual control that has been fruitful of so much complaint during the past year or two. Members who have had any connection with this matter will know that the chief cause of complaint on the part of those who have been endeavouring to secure land, particularly during the past 12 months, has been that they have been forced to go from pillar to post, from one department to another, and from one officer to another, which results in exasperating delay and, in many cases, to the utter disgust of the applicant, so that he gives up the attempt. It has been stated, I think—

The Premier: That is not the case now.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I think it is. Does the Premier mean not the case now or not the case under the Bill? If it is not the case now this Bill will certainly legalise and give statutory authority for a condition of things for which no more authority has existed than is found in the administrative acts of the Minister in the past. The main provision in this connection is that which relates to the appointment of a board. I do not know how the board will be constituted so far as two of its members are concerned. We know that one will be a representative of the Returned Soldiers' Association, although it is not intended, I believe, to give that association a say in the selection of that representative, which will be made by the Government themselves. Then there is to be an outside citizen who, I presume, will be some man possessed of business qualifications and perhaps a knowledge of land settlement.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Why not use the usual expression, business acumen?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, we might do so. Although it is not expressly stated, we can gather that it is the intention of the Government that the other two members shall be public servants. Whether one disagrees or agrees with the constitution of the board, if it is composed of two public servants who

will be subject to the control of the Minister, as indeed will the board itself be, one is faced with the question of whether this is the best possible board that may be obtained in the circumstances.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Do you say the Minister should have no control at all?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I say that if we are going to have a board that is going to be effective at all, it should have greater powers in many respects than are conferred upon it under this Bill.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): And override the Minister.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is no use setting up a dummy board that may be pushed down at the sweet will of the Minister.

Mr. Teesdale: While the soldier is being banded backwards and forwards.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is the policy of the Government that a board should be appointed. That being the case, it should be a board possessed of greater powers in some respects than are provided for in this Bill. A close examination of the powers and duties of this board reveals the fact that they may do nothing definitely without the approval of someone else, or some other department, except to make a selection of the soldier settler. The power and the final choice of the settler rests with the board, but in every other respect the board is subject to what some department of State may do, or what some other individual in some of these departments may do. It is provided that they can recommend, after deciding on the qualification of the settler, to the Agricultural Bank what assistance shall be given and what advances shall be made to the applicant. The board has no power whatever to enforce, or to decide finally, that such assistance shall be given. After having investigated the merits of the case, and made a recommendation that assistance should be given, the matter passes on to the Agricultural Bank, which is where the dual control comes in, and that institution may, if it thinks fit, give effect to the recommendation of the board, but, on the other hand, it may entirely ignore and set aside that recommendation. In the event of a difference of opinion as to the amount and the nature of the assistance that should be offered between the Agricultural Bank and the members of the board, who is going to decide?

Mr. Pickering: The Agricultural Bank.

Mr. Teesdale: There is a complete deadlock.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, except that the power, although not expressly stated, will be possessed by the Agricultural Bank. Because the Agricultural Bank says "No; we do not approve of your recommendation" that is an end of the matter. To whom are we going to give the power? What is the use of an expensive board, as this will be in many respects, investigating the merits of these applications and going thoroughly into them, and passing them over to the Agricultural Bank, when the manager of that institution may decide that the security is not sufficient for the amount of the advance recommended,

and may decline to carry out the recommendation?

Mr. Teesdale: That is where all the trouble is now.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is proof of the dual control which is provided for under this Bill. First of all, the applicant has to go before this board to get their endorsement as to his being a suitable person. The board then deals with the application for assistance and passes it on to the Agricultural Bank, which may grant the assistance asked for or may refuse it. Whether it goes from the Agricultural Bank to the Minister or not the Bill does not say, and whether it is intended that the Minister shall at this juncture act as a sort of umpire between the board and the Agricultural Bank the Bill does not say. Possibly the Minister would exercise his power and authority at this stage, but it ought to be made clear and should not be left in doubt as to where the final control rests. The board have no power even to make a recommendation in regard to Crown lands. If it is desirable that a board should make recommendations with regard to repurchased estates or other holdings, I do not see why the same power should not be conferred upon this board with regard to Crown lands. Here the question of the area or locality, or anything else in connection with the Crown lands which may be set aside or dealt with for soldier settlement, is reserved entirely to the judgment and discretion of the Minister. The board does not come in at all. There again is where we will find the applicant having to go from one department to another. The board itself have no power to settle any soldiers or finally deal with any matter except the selection of the applicants.

Mr. Teesdale: And the cancellation of the applications.

Hon. P. COLLIER: They have no power whatever with regard to the financing of any of the settlers. It appears to me that what is wanted is one authority. Whether it be the Minister or the board is a matter for the House to decide. Whichever it be, let that one body be the final power and authority to deal with all matters relating to the settlement of these men. We want one authority to deal with all these matters; not that the applicant shall be sent from one department to another, which involves considerable delay, and inevitably gives rise to dissatisfaction and discontent, and accordingly interferes with the final success of the measure. We want a final authority to decide the question as to Crown lands, where, and in what area, and all matters dealing with the settlement upon such land, in order that we may secure such lands as may be required for the purposes of this Bill. The same authority, whether it be the Minister or the board, should be vested with powers to deal with repurchased estates. Here again we will have dual control. This is a matter which perhaps can be better dealt with in the other Bill which is now on the Notice Paper. At all events, this is tending to perpetuate the system of having two or three, mostly three, authorities handling the one subject. Above all we ought to have one body

dealing with the question of finances. That will be one of the big and important questions in the administration of this Bill. There ought to be no ambiguity whatever in the Bill as to where the final authority rests with regard to the financing of the scheme. The whole success of the matter will depend upon the wisdom and judgment exercised in financing the scheme, and in connection with all matters relating to finances generally. We ought, therefore, to make sure that we know who is going to be finally responsible in this direction. The position should not be as it is now in the Bill. The board and the Agricultural Bank and the Minister, all three, have a divided authority under this Bill. These are matters which will have to be thrashed out in detail in Committee. I would prefer to see this board swept away altogether than to have it as a mere dummy institution, as it will be in this case. I prefer to have it swept away and have the matters administered by the Minister, than to give the full authority and power to deal with every matter connected with the settlement of our soldiers under the Act, as under the system proposed. I see no insuperable difficulty—

The Premier: We do not really want the Act.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Except insofar as it deals with concessions, I do not see that we want the Bill at all. It is, in fact, of no value to us. It does not concede very much greater powers than are already possessed by the Minister or the Government. The Minister in charge of the business has power practically to do everything by way of administration which is set up in this Bill, except in regard to reducing the purchase prices and interest, and matters of that kind.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: We altered the Act to give that power in 1916.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Bill is of very little value. The only new thing in it is that it sets up this board which, in my opinion, is going to be a hindrance rather than an assistance, whilst its powers are limited and confined in the manner in which they are. It is of no earthly use whatever. We know that members of a board may, if they do not act in a way which the Government think best, be removed at the will or discretion of the Government of the day. The only other work they may be called upon to do will be to improve holdings, to clear and to fence and to attend to matters of that description. But a board cannot render any greater service with regard to obtaining information than anyone can get from the records of the Lands Department and the Agricultural Bank. The only definite power that the board have is in regard to the men themselves. A special board has already been in existence for the past year or two. Their duty has been to deal with applications and make selections and their recommendations have been acted upon, I believe on every occasion, so that if we are merely setting up a board and giving statutory power to them with all the elaborate trimmings and machinery to continue that which has been done in the past, then where is the need for it? There is no necessity to go to all this

trouble with regard to the board to accomplish something which has already been the practice ever since the settlement of soldiers has been taken up during the past year or two. If we are not going to give some finality to this board, we had better sweep it away altogether, and let the Minister accept the responsibility of administering the Act and giving effect to it. I am certain that if the Premier were dealing with the whole question, a great saving of time would result so far as financing the scheme and making the land available was concerned. At any rate, we would have the matter dealt with with greater despatch than under the proposals where applicants must first go to the board and get a certificate. The board then deals with applications and makes recommendations, and then there follows a deadlock, and the matter perhaps is dropped unless the Minister steps in. These, however, are matters of detail which can be dealt with when the Bill is in Committee. As I said at the outset, I am convinced that every member will be actuated by a desire to produce the best possible result. Certainly we cannot extend too generous a sympathy to those who will be affected by the provisions of the Bill and its administration, and if the final result should be that greater despatch and better satisfaction will be obtained amongst the returned men who are anxious to make a living from the land, some good will be done. There are many of the clauses that I will have something to say on when the Bill is in Committee and in regard to which I propose to make suggestions in the hope of effecting improvements. I have nothing further to say except that I believe as the Bill is now drafted it will accomplish very little improvement, if any, upon the existing method of administration.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam) [5.22]: What we want to legislate for is some convenient and practical method of dealing with our returned soldiers. I have listened with a good deal of attention to the leader of the Opposition. A great deal of what he said is perfectly true. He objects to a board and he very rightly says he does not see much use in appointing one. The settlement of the people on the land is no new matter. In 1910 we approved of over 7,000 applications.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): You "settled" a few of them.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The elegant gentleman who has interjected has done nothing in his political life to his credit.

Mr. Munsie: He told those you settled on the land to go and get work.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The hon. member has never done anything at all which has been helpful to this country since he has been a member of the House, I think 10 years. It is a very easy matter to sneer at these people who have gone on the land, but as the member for North-East Fremantle can tell the House, if it had not been for the settlement of many of these people on the land some years back, the position would have been very desperate for many of them who had been honest tailors. We developed the land in order to find em-

ployment for people who were out of work. Now we must determine definitely what we propose to do for our soldiers and what methods we propose to adopt. It will be very difficult to improve on the existing methods. We must face a broad and simple scheme. I would like hon. members to keep clearly before them what we have undertaken to do for the soldiers. We have undertaken to settle on the wheat land those who desire to go there, and to see that they have a complete farm, with the requisite area of 600 acres cleared. We have undertaken to see that the farms are properly equipped and we have also undertaken to give them assistance to enable them to carry on until they are in a position to proceed without further Government help. The amount which has been promised them is £500, but we have not limited ourselves to that. Assistance has always been given to our farmer settlers, and if hon. members will inquire at the Agricultural Bank they will find that the average advanced by the bank to those who have had assistance has been nothing like £500. As a matter of fact, loans have been approved and very seldom used to a much greater extent than 50 per cent. of the total authorised. It is no use attempting to settle soldiers on the land unless we make it possible for them to make the farms pay and get a comfortable living from them. I do not say that 600 acres must be cleared in one, two or three years, but a man must have a living area and full equipment such as horses and machinery necessary to enable him to work the land properly. We have agreed to find all this. Further we have agreed to see that the soldiers get a decent living allowance in order that they may carry on operations. With regard to the South-West and farming operations there, we know that a man who has 100 acres of first class land suitably improved can make a very good living out of it. It means, however, that we must provide a settler there with at least 20 acres of cleared country and we must provide for a house, stock and machinery. Of course, the machinery for 20 acres of cleared land would not be very much. We have agreed to find cows and other stock that may be necessary, and again we must see that the settler gets an allowance sufficient to enable him to live on comfortably. It was agreed by the Government which was represented by my friends opposite, and subsequently by the Wilson Government, that this would be done. We should also have smaller blocks nearer to our towns available for those who are not able to cultivate large areas. We ought to be in a position to allow such men to go on areas of from 10 to 30 acres. I believe, too, we should make it possible for men who desire to go in for dairying in the Eastern districts to purchase farms up to 100 acres in extent. These, of course, would be men with families. These small farms, too, would have to be improved and hon. members will recognise that we can do this work as well. This is the first time in the history of the State that the Government have had anything offered to them for the development of our broad acres. The Commonwealth Government say that we can have the money neces-

sary to settle 4,000 people on the land, each one to receive £500. I do not think it will be necessary to provide very much more than that £500, but whatever may be necessary will have to be found or we must give up the scheme. I believe, however, that £500 will carry us over the first three years. The Wilson Government offered to see that this work was undertaken and they offered improved farms for the soldiers. It was stipulated that so far as the South-West was concerned, the soldiers should not be asked to go on the land which was altogether unimproved. No preparation has been made. We know it will be a slow business, notwithstanding the anxiety, and no matter how active they may be it will take some years to perform. In addition to the advance which we proposed to find, we agreed to see that these people are properly controlled and their work properly performed. We agreed to see that the soldier shall earn a proper living wage. It is mentioned in the statement as 9s. a day. We agreed to continue the advance until the soldier had sufficient to carry him on for fully a year. We proposed to do something more for the soldier than for the ordinary settler, and we must do it, and we must see that when the soldier goes on the land he has every chance, and a comfortable living in the meantime. Every member of the Wilson Government agreed to these proposals, that the work should be done and methods employed and the advance paid. Parliament knows what happened, and I believe the people of the country fully approved of it. In addition to our own soldiers, we agreed to provide for British soldiers as well—4,000 of our own soldiers in addition to British soldiers. That is the agreement made with the Federal authorities, and it is a perfectly reasonable and right undertaking. If the Bill is carried, and if the present methods are allowed to continue, our work will amount to repudiation, because there is no possible chance of living up to the undertaking to settle 4,000 soldiers. We want continuity of policy; we want the settler to distinctly understand what he is entitled to get, and we want every soldier to get an equal amount for an equal quantity of work done. If there is any change in the method, it should be a change for the better, and not to his disadvantage. I think we ought to encourage settlement and not discourage it. We ought to make every soldier understand what the Government offer, as every soldier should understand that the allowance will be equal to a decent living, equal to a labourer's job in the city of Perth plus free house rent and other advantages, such as making their own butter, and making their own bread. He should understand that this is better than a labourer's job; he should understand that there is no compulsion about it. Especially must he exercise a free choice as to the district in which he should settle. We still think the surveyors should be working cutting up the land where it is available. It can and ought to be done. It is not an impossible task to cut up 4,000 blocks of land in this State. I have just told the House that in 1910, 7,000 blocks were made available, and in 1910-11 6,000 blocks. And we were told the other night that 700 inquiries were made about land in the department, and that no fur-

ther notice was taken. The future of the State depends on successful land settlement, and largely by soldiers. If the State is to have a future it must be by primary industry. The Premier said last night that there should be production and more production. We can only get that from the soil, and one industry is open to us. That was largely recognised by the Federal authorities when they said to the Government of Western Australia, "If you will provide for 4,000 soldiers we will do the rest." Again, notwithstanding anything that has been said against settlement, it is the only opening that gives a man a decent living, in addition to the chance of acquiring something. To accomplish this work two years ago the first departmental activity was made in the Lands Department. The surveyors should have been undertaking and persisting in the activity until something more than 4,000 blocks were made available. The present Government propose to look into the land adjacent to railway lines and see if they can be made suitable. I agree that where the land adjacent to railway lines can be taken it should be taken, and there are many thousands of acres of land in the wheat belt that can be made available. There are thousands of acres that were secured in the early days and locked up. All that land can now be thrown open. This land should be selected now, or our rabbit pest will become a menace to the adjoining farmers. The Government must become active in this direction. Every acre of the land adjoining existing railway lines should become available. Unless surveys are undertaken now, and the soldiers told what is available nothing will be done. A man goes to the Lands office and has a very poor chance indeed. He does not return, as we were told, and unless soldiers are encouraged they will not return. The best blocks adjacent to railway lines should be thrown open to the soldiers. The member for Toodyay knows that there is land in his locality which should be thrown open for soldier selection. In addition to all the land that has been repurchased and paid for, we should have to deal with the lands in the fair, far South-West, represented by the Honorary Minister for Lands. Notwithstanding that it has been announced that the railway is not to be built, I say that if this work is to be accomplished we shall have to go down there, and further, a survey of the railway is necessary to open up the country. This should be undertaken at once. The Premier and the Attorney General are familiar with the district, and it will hold as many people as we have in the State to-day. They have said so, and if that is the truth, and I believe it is, a few miles of railway should not prevent the opening up of this country. In 1916 the Minister for Works started the survey of the railway, and did some of the work to construct the railway between Manjimup and Denmark. I believe that work has been stopped. I remember when Mr. Wilson was Premier he urged that a survey of the blocks should be undertaken. It is a pity those surveys have not been kept going during the past two and a half years. Very few surveyors are available. I do not know if the Minister for Lands can secure surveyors.

I doubt if he could get more than 20 in the State to-day. I notice that the Bill before the House proposes to repurchase lands. If it is in the mind of the Minister to repurchase estates valued at £10,000 and over, it should not be necessary to do so much work in connection with the inspection of properties. This is not the time to spend thousands of pounds in the inspection of properties that are settled, neither is it the time when we can afford to have surveyors classifying land that is already settled. We want the surveyors to work, for the basis of success rests on the surveyors. The future of the country, in my opinion, rests on the surveyors. But it will not be achieved if the surveyors are kept about Perth.

Mr. Harrison: You should have said that years ago, for you had an opportunity of doing something then.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I had no opportunity of doing anything.

Mr. Harrison: Just the same opportunity as there is to-day.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I was not the Minister for Lands two years ago, and the hon. member knows it. I urged surveys, and I believe there are minutes which will prove that. I urged the surveys in order that we should prepare blocks before settlement, and I know the Government have definitely decided, or they have distinctly stated, that they will not prepare this land. Practically, they say, it must wait until the soldiers return. It is no use passing this Bill if we are to sit still until the soldier comes back. I understand by the attitude of the House that this Bill will be endorsed, and the determination of the Government will be endorsed. Members will do wrong in that. To-day, in dealing with this Bill, they will have an opportunity of altering the decision of the Government. The Bill that we are dealing with represents the Government's ideas and intentions, and I hope it will not be passed in its present shape, but when it is passed it will represent the views of the majority. We should not leave anything to chance. There are some bad provisions in it, and there are some good provisions. I shall refer to the latter later on. The bad provisions are crushing and killing the scheme. I have had some thing to do with soldiers during the last few weeks. I have gone around the departments several times, and I have met Mr. McLarty who is a good man, and the officers with him are good officials. They were in the department in my time and I know them, and know they are sympathetic. The work is the work of the Government, and unless the land is made available and the policy fixed right and definite, what are they able to do? I hope the House will not agree to confirm what is being done to-day. If the Bill is passed it will keep people off the land and not assist in settling our soldiers. If hon. members will visit the Lands Department and just see what happens, they will learn something. They should, I think take an interest in the soldier settlement question. Very little interest has been shown in it. Going into the Lands Department and turning to the right, anyone of

not less than 16 years of age can walk up to the counter and ask for, and obtain, any block of land that is open for selection, without any doubt or board or inquiry. A child of 16 can simply say "I am eligible to select land, and I mean to have this block," and the child must obtain it. That is the law of the land to-day.

Mr. Pickering: It is the same for the soldier.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: After getting the block, one can go to the Agricultural Bank and straightaway obtain a loan. But the wearer of a returned soldier's badge is expected, on entering the Lands Department, to turn to the left. Then he is asked the question "Have you got your discharge?" He produces it. "All right; sign this request to get on the register." He does sign the request—a long sheet. Then he is instructed to face the doctor and obtain a medical certificate of fitness. Thereafter he has to face a qualification board.

The Attorney General: Why not?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Why should not one have to do all these things if one turns to the right instead of to the left? Any returned soldier who is not drawing a pension should be regarded as fit to become a settler in this country. Of course, if a man were obviously ill, it would be all right to refer him to a medical board.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): There is nothing to prevent the returned soldier from turning to the right and taking up land on the same conditions as ordinary settlers.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am very much obliged for that interjection. In return for the small advantages to be granted the soldier under this Bill, he is to be forced to give up something. The advantages in question are to be granted to him because he has fought for this country, and then the advantages are to be taken from him again by restrictions which are not imposed on the ordinary settler. I repeat, any soldier who does not draw a pension is fit to become a settler. As a fact, if he turns to the right, he can become a settler even if he is dying of consumption. If the Honorary Minister's interjection means that this is a process for thinning out applicants, the contrivance is certainly ingenious.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): No. It is a contrivance by which the Commonwealth determine whether the man should have the £500.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: When the returned soldier gets before the qualification board, what happens to him then? He is required to make a statement on oath. Would hon. members believe that to be possible?

The Premier: He cannot get the £500 otherwise.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: If Ministers will refer to what obtains in the other States, they will find that all this business has not to be faced by the returned soldiers there.

The Premier: All the States require it.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: No. What is required of the soldier in Queensland?

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Queensland does not get the Commonwealth advance.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I believe Queensland gets it now.

The Premier: In that case, Queensland must impose the same conditions.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: South Australia sends the returned soldiers into training camps, which possibly represents a weeding out process. Our position, however, is very different from that of South Australia, Victoria, and New South Wales, because we have the land available. In those other States production is much further advanced than it is here, and they have to purchase the land for the settlement of soldiers. But to return to my point. Just imagine allowing a schoolboy of 16 to make a statement at a counter, and requiring the returned soldier to make a statement on oath before a board. The board sit on Tuesdays. I went there with a soldier, and I discovered that it is a difficult matter to arrange to get before the board. On this occasion the board were very busy, and they thought the soldier might well come back in a week's time. But if that sort of thing is to continue, let hon. members imagine what the position will be in, say, a year's time. The Commonwealth Government will supply the money if only the State Government will find the land; and the Commonwealth Government do not require all these restrictions and questionings. Here to-day a man can get 160 acres of land free, and obtain an advance from the Agricultural Bank at six per cent. If the man is a soldier, he still gets 160 acres free, and in respect of the remainder of the area taken up he has no rent to pay for the first five years. In addition, he gets money at 3¼ per cent. for the first year, the rate increasing by one half cent. annually until it reaches that which is paid by the ordinary selector. We are giving these advantages to the returned soldier because we believe he is entitled to some consideration at our hands. But it is perfectly useless to offer these advantages if we set up restrictions which destroy the soldier's opportunities of getting the land. The Bill contains some good clauses. For instance, Clause 11 provides that the soldier shall pay only half the price that is charged to the ordinary selector. The same clause allows an advance for furniture, which I believe is also granted by the Commonwealth. Then, under our law, the soldier is freed from payment of registration fees. Apart from the charging of only half the value of the land, the advantages granted to the returned soldier are very slight indeed. I object absolutely to management by a board. The management good enough for the ordinary selector ought to be good enough for the soldier, and I hope the House will agree with me in that. If the Commonwealth want a board to have a look at the soldiers, let us have a board that will do as little as possible. Why should we subject the

soldier to trouble and bother to which the ordinary selector is not subjected? Why should the soldier be asked to obtain a certificate of physical fitness? Thousands of rejects, men refused for military service, are working farmers in this country to-day. I am by no means sure that the board, just from examination and questioning of the soldier, would know whether he is fit to become a farmer. Naturally, I have no desire to place on the land a man obviously unfit for the work. The delays inherent in the present process mean that the work of soldier settlement on the land will never be accomplished. The board's powers under the Bill are to a large extent discretionary; but, notwithstanding the statement to the contrary made by the leader of the Opposition, the board have very considerable powers. Whilst to the ordinary selector land cannot be refused, the fighter, the man who turns to the right, may be refused land by the board. And there are other equally drastic provisions. Certain aspects of the group system of soldier settlement seem to me a pretty rotten proposal. All land settlement is more or less group settlement; but group settlement does not mean that people are to be chained together, and that they are to be tested as to their fitness for work on the land. Under this Bill, I suppose, at the end of 12 months a man found not to be fit for group settlement will be discharged. Group settlement will be useful in our new country, so that people may not be isolated. But a soldier taking up land in a settled district would be just as comfortable as he could be in a group settlement. The ownership of land in a group settlement, moreover, should be just as isolated as in the case of ordinary holdings. No doubt a group settlement can be provided with facilities and can be dealt with far more easily than a number of soldiers settled in isolated spots. I really doubt whether this Bill is needed, and if it gets into Committee I shall move some drastic amendments. The Land Act, I consider, should be amended.

Hon. T. Walker: It practically covers the ground.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Yes. We amended the Land Act in 1916 in order to meet what is proposed by this Bill. There ought to be no difference between the ordinary settler and the returned soldier settler, except to the latter's advantage. This Bill should provide that the soldier shall have preference as regards all Crown lands available for settlement. It should not be left to the Minister for Lands to set apart areas for soldiers alone. I have a criticism to offer on that provision of the Bill which I characterised as good, namely, the sale of land to returned soldiers at half the ordinary prices. That provision will not confer an equal advantage on all returned soldier settlers, as I think should be the case. Under the provision, a soldier selecting 2,000 acres of land would get, in effect, 1,000 of the 2,000 free; whereas another soldier selecting only 1,000 acres would be obtaining only 500 acres free. We know, too, that the free farm of 160 acres

is a very good proposition, and that the area is quite sufficient for a settler in the South-West. The half-price, however, will mean nothing to such a man. In the wheat belt we might give 640 acres as a free farm to the returned soldier. It would be a clear transaction, and equally available to everybody. The title would be given to a man who lived on his block for six months yearly during a period of five years, and who performed certain improvements within seven years. Such is the present free homestead farm system. Beyond what I have indicated, I would not set up any restriction. We might even extend the seven years for improvements to 10 years or 20 years, but when the improvements are complete the soldier should have his certificate just as freely as the ordinary settler. Under the Bill he is to suffer some disadvantage in this regard. This would mean that the soldier would have to pay for any land selected beyond the 640 acres. However, the advantage would still be there, and the transaction would be clean and would amount to something appreciable. In the case of a pastoral lease, I think the rent should be abated to the extent that the free farm of 640 acres would benefit the selector of that farm. The monetary advantage to all should be equal. If the free farm is worth, say, £300, then the man taking a pastoral lease should be benefited to exactly the same extent, as there should be no distinction in the advantage to be given to the soldier settlers under the different systems. I hope the House will insist that the soldier is to have all the freedom of an ordinary settler plus the advantages specially provided for him. Let me point out to the Minister that some soldiers will take advantage of the land available to soldiers, but will not require any financial assistance. Some soldiers will accept a free farm but will not require any further assistance from the Government. Would the Government propose to inquire into the physical fitness or the experience of such men? A man who is unfit to do the work himself might employ someone else to do it for him. The improvement conditions are compulsory. The friends of a soldier who is not physically fitted to enter upon an ordinary city avocation might agree to assist in providing a farm for him, apart from the Government assistance, and if that position be set up I think the soldier, even if sick, should be allowed to select land. It ought to be clearly understood where the responsibility of the Lands Department begins and ends. The Lands Department should survey the land and prepare it to that extent. They should survey blocks ahead of requirements, and when the blocks are surveyed they ought to be submitted to the Agricultural Bank, who could approve or disapprove of the land as capable of being made into a satisfactory farm. It was the system until 1911 and it ought to be reintroduced. It is quite a simple matter to do it, so long as the surveys are well in hand. Of course I quite understand that when you turn to the bank they will want to know from the soldier whether he is capable of doing the work.

Mr. Teesdale: Is not that to be discussed and settled by the board?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Yes, but I have submitted other suggestions. I say that the bank should be responsible for the advances, and the Lands Department responsible for the lands. We amended the Agricultural Bank Act to enable a lower rate of interest to be charged, thus making it possible for the bank to advance for necessary work.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: No. The Federal and State Governments are making up the difference between them.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: But we provided in the Act that in respect of the soldier the interest might be $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. for the first year. There must be no uncertainty about the advancing to a soldier once he has selected his land. It will be necessary to repurchase land, because it is so desirable that we should settle soldiers in those localities whence they came, near to their own people. We shall be dealing with the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act Amendment Bill in a little time, and I hope the Minister will see to it that land is made available to a soldier in the district from which he enlisted. I think there ought to be a provision in the measure to that effect, for it is rather too much to expect the board to decide upon a question of that sort. If we repurchase land in a given locality we should see to it that any soldiers from that locality have first call on that land. This question of settling on the land people without means is no new one.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You settled some and put the railway 10 miles too far away.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: No. The member for North-East Fremantle ought to tell the story of the settlement he suggested to me years ago. There was an unemployed crisis of a serious character in Fremantle. There was no work for the men to do. The hon. member suggested to me that I might settle some of them on the land. I attended a meeting at Fremantle and offered to take 50 of the men, those with the largest families. The member for Roebourne will learn, if he goes out to the settlement at Yorkkraine, exactly what happened. As a matter of fact, only a few days ago a man interested in repatriation brought two of those settlers to me. One explained that he had arrived at Yorkkraine with a shilling in his pocket and had lost it the first day.

Mr. Teesdale: At two-up?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: No, he was not a two-up man, he was a hard working man. He explained the other day that he was now out of debt, except in regard to the Agricultural Bank, that he had a decent home, with the necessary stock to work his plant, that he had several cows and, in general, was well provided for. His boys had gone to the war, and for the time being he was left to do the work of the farm himself. The other man had much the same tale to tell. He was in the same satisfactory position.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): What became of the other forty-eight?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Several of them are still there.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): How many of them?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Apparently the Minister does not know. The Minister ought to know.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I know of a dozen.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: There are 30 men in that settlement to-day. The Minister ought to know that. If 30 men who settled there 10 years ago and who have been subjected to the bad seasons we have passed through are to-day grateful for the chances they have been given, I think it would be worth the Minister's while to go there and see what has been done. It is true that they have to cart a longer distance than I wish to see the soldiers carting.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That settlement of mine turned out well. The only mistake has been that those men now vote Country party.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: When matters were blue with those gentlemen the hon. member did not claim the settlement as his. However, land settlement for people without means is not new in this State. We have an experience such as no other State can boast. The wheat being shipped away to-day has been produced by men who started on the land with less money than the soldiers will have, and the task ought to be much easier with these more liberal provisions intended to apply to the soldiers. I should like the soldiers to have the first chance of selecting the best land still untouched in the South-West. What has been done on the wheat areas for the men settled there can be done in the South-West. Thousands of men can be settled there, with every prospect of making a very comfortable living. In the South-West the rainfall, the climate, and the seasons, are all that can be desired. Probably no spot on earth is more favourably situated. Of course the clearing is heavy, but the land is worth it. It does not matter if £20,000 is spent clearing an acre so long as that acre is worth £30,000 when cleared. I suppose crops can be grown on the western slope at Bridgetown all the year round. Land in New Zealand valued at £80 per acre has not the advantage of a climate such as that of the South-West.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I have no wish to labour the question further, because it must be obvious to everyone that this experience ought to be sought, if it has not already been sought by the Minister. Before this Bill becomes law, it will need a great deal of amendment. The definition of a discharged soldier sets up some conditions which ought to be removed, and particularly do I object to the definition to be extended, except at the will of the Minister, to the British soldier. There ought to be no uncertainty there, and the British soldier ought to be included in the definition of a discharged soldier in the same way that it includes the Australian soldier. I hope, too, that the provisions regarding the board will be materially altered. We ought to have a Minister responsible. We must have some centre at which we can fire. If the Minister is unprepared, through any neglect or other cause, to have land surveyed, the board could be useful because they could make it possible for the Minister to be saddled with the blame. There is a provision in regard to

the acquiring of land at the request of a soldier which will need amendment, because under the clause in question it will be impossible for a soldier to buy another man's home.

The Premier: You cannot buy another man's home unless he is willing to sell it.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: If this clause is not to be given effect to, it is surely unnecessary to have it in the Bill. I can understand that the Minister's desire is that where a soldier holds a block under an agreement of purchase, it may be acquired by the soldier. That is a perfectly reasonable and right provision. Where negotiations have been entered into between the owner of the land and the soldier, and both parties are willing, the Government might purchase.

The Premier: It is quite plain.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I agree it is quite plain, but it goes further than that.

The Premier: Would you like to have further words added to it?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I should like to have fewer words and more sense in it. I am sure the Colonial Treasurer, who has already discussed this clause with me, will agree that it ought not to be allowed to remain in the Bill.

The Premier: You cannot buy land unless the man is willing to sell.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The clause will need to be made clearer. Since we have power to acquire land by compulsion under another Act perhaps there is no need for the clause at all.

The Premier: This is not a compulsory clause.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It may be responsible for considerable inconvenience and annoyance to people.

The Premier: Oh, no.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I think it may. When we come to it, we will have to alter it.

The Premier: The lawyers will explain it.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: They are nearly always wrong.

The Premier: They differ very often.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Thank heaven, they do. I would like to impress upon the House once more that the basis of successful settlement rests with the Survey Department. The Surveyor General is the man to whom we must look for the first step. The board cannot order surveys, and cannot decide where surveys are to be made. It would be impossible for them to do so, because they have no knowledge as to where the land is that ought to be surveyed. The Survey Department must act independently, and my hope is that the Ministry will see that it is given the necessary power to employ as many surveyors as are needed in the survey of Crown lands. I hope that the advances on cleared land and the other conditions in connection with land settlement will be made simpler for the soldiers than they are for the ordinary settler, and that the House will insist that the advantages are not discounted by any unnecessary restrictions. I was told by the Honorary Minister (Hon. F. E. S. Willmott) that advice had come from the Federal Government that we must have soldiers approved by a board. We have just had the file

dealing with the settlement of soldiers laid on the Table of the House. This was done in response to a motion which was carried here. I have looked through the file, which is a ragged one and contains very little information. I cannot obtain from it the intention of the Government in the matter, and I have not been able to see the intimation from the Federal Authorities to which I was referred. If it be their instruction that the powers of the board shall be as they are under this Bill, and that their inquiries shall be conducted as provided for here, the sooner we approach the Federal Government to have the thing remedied, the better. I believe I am right in saying that the soldiers provide a grand opportunity to this State. We cannot afford to miss the chance of developing Western Australia, and we cannot afford to dishonour our country by neglecting to help the soldier. When the Federal Government made the arrangement they said, "What will you do?" They were told what we would do, and have said "If you do that, we will do the rest." I think the offer was a generous one, and that the Government should have no difficulty in providing a scheme which will give effect to the undoubted promise made on behalf of the people of the State by the various Governments that have been in power since the war began. The utmost publicity should be given to the intentions of the Government. Whatever we intend to do should be made quite clear and definite, and the information should be widespread. No soldier returning from the war should be in doubt as to what he has a right to ask for. It is useless to say that there is no dissatisfaction amongst the men to-day. There are dissatisfied men, and they will be dissatisfied until they have a fairly wide choice of blocks. I have talked the matter over with the Honorary Minister, and I hope I have managed to impress him with the need for surveys first. It is idle to do anything unless surveys are made. Prosperity can only come to this country after survey, and justice can only be done to the soldier after survey. In Committee I hope members will so shape the Bill that the soldiers will be perfectly satisfied that, whilst we are offering them advantages, we are not setting up disadvantages which will do away to a great extent with the benefits we are prepared to give to them.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [7.40]: Unfortunately, owing to the train service, I was absent from the Chamber when the Premier made his speech when introducing this Bill. I have, however, read his speech, and drew rather a happier augury from it than I have been able to do from the Bill itself. Some little time ago I spoke on the question of repatriation, and said that I felt the Government were considering more the interests of the Government and their possessions than the interests of those men whom they promised to serve. The Bill as we have it before us lies very much on these lines. Throughout the discussion it has been evident from what the Premier and others said that they are considering more the position of the men who are returning to-day, than that of the large volume of men whom we hope will be returning to our

shores in the near future. In view of the fact that the large body of men who will be returning to this State when the war is over will be more or less sound and physically fit, I do not see the necessity for the drastic clause in connection with medical inspections. The point which appears to be open for discussion on this measure is particularly in regard to the board and its relation to the Agricultural Bank. Provision is made for a board of four members. One of these is to be an ex-soldier, and another some person outside the department. There are also to be on the board two departmental or Government officers. The Bill does not say from what department these officers are to be drawn. It should be stated that one of these officers should come from the Lands Department and the other from the Agricultural Bank Department. I am of opinion that this board should have executive powers, or else should be non-existent, one or the other. If an officer was drawn from the Lands Department and another from the Agricultural Bank Department, it is evident that they would be thoroughly competent to deal with the conditions appertaining to the particular avenues through which the repatriation scheme on the land is to be conducted. If an officer of the Lands Department controlled all matters in connection with the land, and another from the Agricultural Bank Department controlled all banking matters, co-ordination would exist between the two. No extra staff would be required, and there would be finality reached without any clause being necessary to provide for the final approval of the Agricultural Bank.

The Premier: That is done now.

Mr. PICKERING: I do not see where that is shown. I regret that it should be put in this way, that the Agricultural Bank should be at liberty to turn down any recommendations which emanate from the board. I think the position of chairman should be defined. There will have to be a chairman, and in the interests of the movement, I think it would be better that he should be selected from outside the two officials. Such a man would be more likely to hold the balance of power between the two officials, and there would be a better chance of justice being done to the soldier. There is one thing that strikes me as being a matter that should receive attention, and that is the absence of consideration for the parent. We find that under "dependants" the parent is not mentioned at all. It is quite possible that the parent may be the one dependant of the returned soldier, and therefore consideration should be given to that particular phase. It is difficult to deal with this Bill in its entirety, because another measure which has a great bearing on it is the Agricultural Lands Purchase Bill. That Bill, of course, involves important principles bearing on this measure. One of those principles is illustrated by a case of which I have knowledge. A parent with three sons at the war has his property mortgaged. One of the sons has returned—we hope the others will also return—and the son who has returned desires to purchase that property from the parent. But under the amending legislation pro-

posed it seems to me that no estate of a less value can be repurchased. If that is so, some further amendment should be introduced to meet such a contingency.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): One is compulsory, and the other is not.

Mr. PICKERING: The estate I have in mind is a good property, and acceptable to the Agricultural Bank; but it is mortgaged. I want it to be made possible for the returned son to lift the mortgage and purchase the estate.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): That can be done without this Bill.

Mr. PICKERING: On reference to the Repatriation Acts of the various States I find that survey fees are charged in this connection. Surely in the circumstances the survey fees might well be waived.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): But they are paid out of loan funds.

Mr. PICKERING: Some particular advantage which does not appertain to the ordinary selector should be granted to the returned soldier; and this is a very mild advantage. I agree with the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) that returned soldiers should be given a certain area free. The hon. member suggests that the homestead farm of 160 acres in the South-West is a good and adequate proposition, similarly with the 640 acres in the wheat belt. I am in accord, also, with the leader of the Opposition that some particular advantage should be extended to returned soldiers applying for pastoral leaseholds. In this respect they are really granted no special advantage whatever. If a concession is given in one direction, why not in all directions? The member for Northam said that provision had been made for sustenance of returned soldiers. I see in this Bill no indication of any grant for sustenance purposes.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): That is provided by the Commonwealth repatriation legislation.

Mr. PICKERING: I thought the whole control of land settlement of returned soldiers was vested in the States?

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Yes, apart from sustenance.

Mr. Duff: Sustenance beyond the £500?

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Yes.

Mr. PICKERING: Another matter which appeals to me as requiring amendment is the drastic clause which provides that advances may be stopped. It is true that this will be done under conditions favourable to the scheme, but there may be justification for non-observance of certain conditions laid down by the repatriation scheme. That being so, some appeal ought to be provided for the applicant. The measure makes no provision whatever in that regard.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): He can always appeal to the Minister.

Mr. PICKERING: But the Bill does not say so. Then there is the question of training farms. The New South Wales Act provides a certain percentage of free tuition, but our measure makes the terms upon which soldiers may attend training farms entirely dependent

upon the will of the Minister. Why not introduce the New South Wales provision here? A country like Western Australia, which has done so much in the war, which has made the greatest sacrifices, which has voted for conscription, should show through its Parliament that it considers no concession too great to grant to the returned soldier. My contention all along has been that the repatriation measure of Western Australia should be the model measure of that nature for Australia. That is not achieved by this Bill. As to the South-West, I would regret to occupy a position in this House if I were capable of advocating any portion of the State in preference to, or to the detriment of, any other portion. It would be wrong for any member to use political influence in order to draw attention to his own district. But I do think the South-West is very suitable for returned soldiers desirous of taking up the classes of farming pursuits applicable there. In order that we may do justice to returned soldiers desirous of taking up land in the South-West, we must bear in mind the fact that right through the history of Western Australia the South-West has suffered from a lack of appreciation on the part of the Agricultural Bank. So much power is vested in the Agricultural Bank in connection with this scheme that I fear very much that, unless some amending legislation is brought in to provide for the extension of Agricultural Bank assistance to the settlement of the South-West, we cannot do justice to returned soldiers whom we desire to place there. I hope that, if necessary, an amending measure will be introduced this session to widen the scope of the Agricultural Bank's advances to the South-West, and also to lengthen the term of repayment. The lack of advancement of the South-West has frequently been commented upon in this Chamber. As a man who has assisted to pioneer the South-West, and has had 15 years' experience in opening up that country, I may be credited with speaking not without some knowledge when I say that this is one of the reasons why the South-West has not advanced as it should have done. The basis of the scheme put forward by the Government is settlement on improved areas; and improved areas will have to be bought back, though of course that does not come under this measure. The improved areas will necessarily cost a considerable amount of money; and in considering the selling of them to soldier settlers we must bear in mind the difficulties which have confronted South Australia in this regard. It will be recollected by most hon. members that, when South Australia started repurchasing estates, it made the payments extend over a very limited term. Three alterations of the term were made, and eventually it was extended to 64 years. The proposals in this measure do not extend to such limits; but I contend that in the interests of the soldier settlers, and of the State, no term could be too lengthy if it resulted in a successful solution of this problem. I trust that, in dealing with the measure to which I have alluded, hon. members will have present in their minds the experience of other States

and the necessity for extending the most generous terms to returned soldiers. We must not legislate with a single eye to State interests, to putting a buffer between the coffers of the State and those of the Commonwealth, but give a most liberal-minded construction to this and other measures dealing with repatriation.

Mr. MONEY (Bunbury) [7.55]: I am satisfied that if any scheme of soldier settlement is to be successful, it will be absolutely essential to have local committees, or local boards, for the administration of this measure in districts far removed from Perth. I see no mention in this Bill of a local board or a local committee; and I do hope that the Premier will see the necessity for so amending the measure that if the powers of the central board—which board, I take it, would sit in Perth—are to be delegated, they shall be delegated to local committees or local boards administering the affairs of the returned soldiers in their particular district. I am convinced that the majority of the returned men will wish to settle near their friends and relatives, settle in the district whence they came. I am convinced, also, that this measure will be found extremely deficient as regards meeting the circumstances of individual cases, and that it will have to be amended from time to time on the recommendations of the local boards or committees, who will take a keen interest and a personal interest in the soldiers themselves. No measure of soldier settlement, or any other measure dealing with the affairs of this State, has been successful under central administration. And that will apply to the settlement of soldiers more than to anything else. The returned soldiers will require the personal attention and the personal sympathy of their friends and relatives if they are to be settled on the land successfully and in comfort. I venture that only in respect of this measure, because I feel the supreme importance of that one factor, and the absolute necessity for providing local boards and local committees under this measure.

Mr. H. ROBINSON (Albany) [7.58]: After the action taken in this House some little time ago, and in view of the present Government's idea of doing something practical for our returned soldiers, one might have expected that Ministers would have consulted the returned soldiers themselves and also practical men from the land in the various districts of Western Australia. Had that been done, the Government would have been able to place before Parliament a practical Bill; and I am sorry to say this is anything but a practical Bill. It is stated here from time to time that new members simply criticise, without offering any constructive support. But the sentiments expressed by the member for Bunbury (Mr. Money) have been ventilated in this House for some considerable time. In fact, it was generally understood that the Government would take notice of suggestions coming from the various parts of Western Australia as to sheep breeding and fruit growing and other industries. But the Bill, in its present form, lays bare an absolute lack of knowledge of detail in these respects. There are several aspects of

the Bill on which one could speak for a very long time. Two aspects in particular I should like to offer a few remarks upon. I take exception to that duty of the board which consists in deciding upon physical fitness of soldier applicants, and as to their having the necessary qualifications for farming pursuits. When a man has returned from the front, is it right because he has not the necessary qualification that we should say to him, "You cannot have something which we have been building up and keeping for you." Will the Premier tell the House that every man who applies to the department for an area of land and that all those who have taken up land had previous experience? Why should we debar our worthy soldiers, on their return to the State, from taking up land, when we permit slackers to take it up on even better conditions?

Mr. Teesdale: They will not be debarred if they are capable of working the land.

Mr. H. ROBINSON: There are many in this State who have taken up land and who have never worked it, and I am sure it is not the wish of returned soldiers to select areas unless it is their intention to cultivate them. Nor is it the wish of the House that land should be selected unless there is a genuine intention to make use of it. It is the desire of Parliament that we should do our duty to the soldiers who are returning. I admit that the Government have made an attempt to give them something better than has been given to other people, but it is only a poor attempt. Fancy a poor devil having to appear before the austere board, who do not know anything at all about the particular block the returned soldier wants to take up! The members of the board are resident in Perth, and the soldier may require a block at Mt. Barker. The board will say, "What are your qualifications?" and if the man has not had any previous experience the board can say, "You cannot take up the land under the conditions imposed." The Premier has laid great stress on the fact that the returned men may not be physically fit. Of course not, otherwise they would still be in the firing line. That very statement would preclude men from making applications for holdings. Would we be men if we, who remained behind and reaped the advantage of the services of our soldiers at the front, did not protest strongly against the action of the Government? It behoves Western Australia more than any other State to put before not only her own soldiers, but the British soldiers as well, a better proposition than any other State of the Commonwealth.

Mr. Duff: We are doing that now.

Mr. H. ROBINSON: If we are genuinely disposed to settle not only our own men but men from overseas on the land, what will be the effect of the circulation in London of the news of our failure? Suppose the Agent General, with his vast staff of clerks about whom we heard so much the other night, were interviewed in London by our returning soldiers—and thank God now it will not be long before they are in London on their way back—and they get hold of a Bill like the one we are now considering and find that the Western Australian Government were going to provide land only for those who were physically fit, we can judge

what expressions would be made use of towards the Lefroy Government. It would be impossible to determine the number of intending settlers who would go elsewhere. We should make it perfectly clear what our intentions are. I have not been able to gather from the Premier's remarks whether the £50,000 it is intended to borrow will be used entirely for development work, or whether it is to be used in the direction of establishing and maintaining training farms in various parts of the State. If it is to be used in connection with the training farms, there will be very little for the returned soldier. Furthermore, what is a miserable £50,000 to our men who are coming back to these shores? We will learn shortly that the Industries Assistance Board has advanced over a million to stalwart men who have not been to the front, and for our fighting men we talk about finding a paltry £50,000. We have heard from time to time that the Government have done everything in their power to settle on the land those soldiers who have already returned. I commented on this matter before, and the Minister replied that every soldier who had applied had got what he wanted. I will give two instances to prove the manner in which the present Government are treating our returned heroes, and if that is a sample of what is to follow, then God help them.

The Minister for Works: The Government or the soldiers?

Mr. H. ROBINSON: Both. There is a returned soldier living on a spur line 30 miles from a siding. This soldier took up 2,000 acres and applied for assistance from the so-called board. He has been endeavouring to grow wheat in this isolated place, but has failed and is leaving it with the little that he has left. The proposition that he put before the board was that they should fence the balance of his property and enable him to get some sheep in which way he would probably be able to make ends meet. The wonderful board, which decides whether land is suitable or not for returned soldiers, said, "You have been wheat farming, and you must continue that; we will give you money to purchase more horses and you can extend your wheat farming operations, but we refuse to advance you money for fencing purposes." The soldier told the board that he refused to do any more wheat farming because it was a dead loss, and he wanted the money for fencing so that he might keep some sheep. He had 500 acres fenced with two plain wires and a barbed wire. He wanted four barbed wires to make it sheep and dog proof, and yet the Government, who promise to do so much for returned soldiers, insisted that he should grow wheat 30 miles from a siding. Another returned soldier on land in the vicinity of Albany wanted to build a house on his block of five acres. He was going in for bee farming and fishing. He applied for £200 to enable him to build a house and also to give him a start in other directions, including poultry farming. The board informed him that they would not advance any money for the house. He then applied for a smaller

amount, but that, too, was refused. Fortunately there is a repatriation committee in the town, and that committee advanced him a little money. My contention is that if the returned soldiers have to depend on the Lefroy Government they will have to starve. There is still another instance where a married man wanted to make arrangements to get someone to look after his farm during his absence on active service. The Government absolutely refused to assist him in that direction, and that man went away and left his property in the care of friends in the district. His request to the board was that they should send a man down periodically to keep an eye on the place, but they refused to do so. It is not right that a state of affairs such as I have related should be permitted to exist. I trust that the members of the Ministry will remain in office sufficiently long to be able to present to the House a Bill which will be of some assistance to the returned soldiers, a Bill which will enable the men from our own shores to settle on the land without any difficulty, and which will, in addition, be the means of inducing soldiers from the British Dominions to make their homes here as well.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [8.13]: I have listened with interest to the remarks of the various speakers, and particularly to those of the member for Northam, who, if I remember correctly, was a Minister in the late Cabinet. The hon. member roundly condemned the present Government for not having done anything in the direction of having the land ready for the men who had returned. The hon. member was a member of the Cabinet preceding the present one, and he was the right-hand man of the former Premier, so far as dealing with land matters was concerned. I would like to know what was done by the member for Northam during that period?

The Colonial Treasurer: He surveyed the Nornalup Inlet.

Mr. HARRISON: I suggested that the present Ministry should reserve the Nornalup Inlet for the returned members of the aviation corps, who will find their way down there in second-hand flying machines, for that will be the only means of communication with that place. By that course and that course alone they may make good at Nornalup. Not otherwise can they expect to get communication, except at the great expense of building a railway, and goodness knows when the rails will be obtainable. I have heard a great deal about Nornalup. Possibly it would be a good place for the gentleman referred to by the member for Albany, because I understand there is splendid fishing there, and if that gentleman went in for bee-farming, he would be supplied with bait for his fishing.

Mr. H. Robinson: What I suggested was poultry farming.

Mr. HARRISON: It is only an expert and an enthusiast who can hope to make good at poultry farming. It is of no use trying to induce a lot of returned soldiers to go in for poultry farming, especially see-

ing that they will be unaccustomed to the climatic conditions.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The great majority of the returned soldiers will be Australian born, and so ought to be acclimatised.

Mr. HARRISON: The Bill provides, not only for our own soldiers, but for soldiers from England. It would appear from the remarks of some of the speakers that there is nothing in the Bill which cannot be secured to-day by anyone taking up land under existing conditions. However, the leader of the Opposition very clearly showed what the returned soldiers are to get under the Bill. I agree with the hon. member in all he said in regard to dual control. The dual control of the past has not made for good administration, and if we desire the best for our returned soldiers, we ought to act as promptly as possible. The less we have of dual control the better, for the returned soldiers cannot afford to wait for their land. They require to be fixed up promptly. After their experience at the Front, the sooner those men can be drafted out of the City into the country, the better for them. The member for Bunbury remarked that many of those men would like to get back as soon as possible to the localities whence they came. I suggest to the Government that any abandoned farms which, owing to the obligations on them it is difficult to get rid of, should be re-valued in favour of the returned soldier. Some of those abandoned farms are fast reverting to their virgin state, and it would be sound economy to hand those partly improved properties over to the soldier settlers. Those men, with the assistance they are to get from the Federal Government, would be able to secure very good returns from such farms. We have heard a great deal in favour of the South-West, but I am fully persuaded that our soldiers will not be physically fit to tackle the virgin country of the South-West. The sum of £500 will not go far in clearing that country. It takes pretty well a generation to make a decent farm in the South-West. Of course, when one has got through that period, one then has in the South-West a more solid farm than he could expect to build up anywhere else in the State. But the returned soldiers will not be in a position to wait a generation before coming into a comfortable living. All things considered, the South-West does not fill my eye as a paradise for returned soldiers. It has frequently been pointed out that a man who takes up too much land in the South-West is likely to be poor for the rest of his life. The member for Northam did put up one or two good points. For instance, he remarked that the men settling in our Eastern districts or towards the South-West should have 640 acres free, and should be urged to be content with that unless the Government agreed to free them from the conditions applicable to larger areas. From practical experience I know that in the Eastern districts, two years after the timber has been killed land can be cleared for 25 per cent. of

what it would cost to clear while the timber was still green. The good forest country in that district, although a little more costly to clear, will give a much better return than is to be obtained from poorer land more easily cleared. The inferior land inevitably means more super., and the returns are never so good. On the average our more heavily timbered country gives the better results. The board which will adjudicate on all these matters is to consist, I presume, of men who have been through the mill and who will know the local conditions in various parts of the State where the returned soldiers are likely to be settled. One hon. member recommended the appointment of a number of boards. No doubt if it was the desire of the Government, voluntary boards could be appointed in the various districts to advise the returned soldiers. It will be difficult for the Government to secure a board of four or five men who, sitting in Perth, will know the local conditions obtaining in the various districts. I do not see in the Bill anything to assist men prepared to take up land where the quickest and best returns are to be secured for the least capital outlay. I refer to small pastoral holdings. I am confident that the soldiers would make good more quickly on small pastoral leases than on any other class of land. I am not personally conversant with the conditions in the pastoral areas, but I have discussed the question with members representing pastoral electorates and, further, I am certain that more money will be made out of beef and mutton than out of wheat, and that, too, with less anxiety, less energy, and smaller capital outlay. I trust the Minister will inquire what can be done in that direction. We are all agreed that there is nothing too good for our returned soldiers, and that we should afford them the best possible conditions. The main thing is to get right off the mark and save those men from hanging about the City. The more successful the first to return and go on the land, the greater will be the inducement for those returning later to follow them. The Bill does not provide for placing any of those men in another primary industry, namely, the mineral industry.

MR. SPEAKER: Therefore, the hon. member will not discuss that phase of the question.

MR. HARRISON: It does not follow that because a man appears to be physically unfit, he cannot make good on the land, for life on the land does not entail the exceedingly strenuous work many people seem to imagine. For instance, it is just as easy to drive a team of six as it is to drive a team of two. In fact, personally, I prefer the larger team. They take less attention. The machinery that you work with on the farm does not necessitate walking over rough ground. When a man gets to the stage of making returns, the chances are he will be able to get muscular help to assist in getting off his harvest. Men to-day who have been rejected are making good on the land, and if these men make good the returned men will be able to do so. The

farms of those who have gone away, I agree with the leader of the Opposition, are not of the same value as when they were left. If these settlers have paid more than 50 per cent. of the land rent they should not have to pay more. I trust the few matters to which I have referred, the Minister will take into consideration, and if anything is of value his departmental officers will be instructed to help these men to the best advantage. If the Minister has two or three of his best officers who are thoroughly reliable and sympathetic, and who will throw themselves into the work, I hope he will make a point of getting these officers to assist him in carrying out these particular matters promptly.

MR. TEESDALE (Roebourne) [8.31]: For some time past it has been the custom for individuals and literary men to write to the newspapers and to complain that the West Australian Parliament has done nothing for the returned soldier. If these persons will go into the Bill carefully they will not be able to say that after to-day. From what I see this Bill is the best parts of the measures of the other States carefully put together—only the best parts retained. I hope members opposite will recognise that some of the clauses are copied from the famous Queensland Act. The leader of the Opposition criticised that Act. I do not think the leader of the Opposition thought at the time of the leasehold system or he would not have drawn attention to it. We have retained all the best portions of the Queensland Bill and we have cut out some of the provisions that are not quite workable. I am also pleased to find since the memorable Riverton case that there has been a considerable improvement made in connection with the treatment of returned soldiers as far as departmental matters are concerned. I can assure members to-day it is quite an easy matter, in fact it is quite a pleasant matter for a soldier to go before the selection board to be examined, to make application, to state where his land is situated, to have the land approved of and have the whole matter fixed up, not forgetting the bank, which is an important thing. To my mind the irritation for the soldier commences between the selection board offices and the Agricultural Bank—everything seems to go wrong there, whether it is from lack of sympathy or from indifference, but it is positively annoying for a man to be sent from one department to another, failing to get satisfaction. Perhaps these men are not quite normal and inclined to be unreasonable in small matters, but we must insist on officials being as considerate as possible in their treatment of these matters. It should be clearly understood that there is to be no officialism in the treatment to be meted out to the soldiers. I do not want them to be spoon-fed in any way or treated as children. They are men and ought to have a pretty good knowledge of the world, seeing the experience they have gone through. This scheme cannot be made a success straight off the reel. It is new to all the States. There is no precedent to guide us. There must be experiments and these men must be reasonable and fair, and allow us to discover the defects

in the Bills before they take exception and write to the newspapers and complain bitterly about the treatment. They must remember that everything is new and that the Government are doing their best with the means at their disposal to carry out the promises which were made when they went to the Front. I have no hesitation in saying the Government are trying to carry out the promises. Every member of the Ministry is trying to carry out to the best of his ability any promise made to the soldiers, and are generously interpreting the promises, but it must be borne in mind that all is new and novel. It is positively foreign to Australians who have to deal with such a gigantic scheme of repatriation. It is a difficulty for large centres; those huge centres that have one hundred and one advantages at their disposal that we have not. It is difficult for them to formulate a successful scheme. There have been numbers of failures, and those failures will only be rectified after the Act is put into operation. I am glad to be able to draw attention to mistakes, because I like my friends opposite to recognise that I take back all I said as to the treatment of the Riverton men. I call the Premier's attention to the fact that he spoke disparagingly the other day of the Riverton men. I have been out to that estate recently, and with one exception everything is satisfactory. There are little hitches at times, and when I hear of hitches I like to go out and help to smooth them away. Up to now the men settled are hopeful and confident of making a success of the little holdings which this House was good enough to help them to secure. I trust before they have been on the ground 12 or 18 months they will be able to make a good show of the products of Riverton and confound the people who desire to blame them and be harsh with them. It is most necessary that the board shall be composed of men who are trusted servants of the State; men who are considerate and who have sympathetic natures; who are well known, for everything depends on the first contact of these soldiers with officialism. At that particular time the soldier is either influenced for good or evil, and I think the utmost care should be shown the first time the man approaches the department with a certain amount of misgiving. It is necessary at that time that the utmost allowance and consideration should be shown to them even if their demands are a little unreasonable. I am sorry to see in one clause that the board may cancel the holding of a soldier without giving him compensation for work done. I do not think if a settler has worked hard and practically out of debt, if through some circumstances—it may be a little friction between him and the authorities—he desires to leave the land, I think that man should have something to face the world with again. It does not seem fair for him, having put in five years of work, and certain capital of his own, that he should be thrown out to start life without a few pounds, and I hope the board will take that matter into consideration. I see they have a certain amount of discretionary power given them, and I hope they will not apply it in

a harsh way. While admitting that the Queensland Bill is a very good one, I wish to emphasise the fact that I consider that they are on the right track in Queensland. They have many advantages there which we have not. They are enabled to make a fair show with little expense compared with Western Australia. We have heavy clearing here and soil that requires a lot of work. They are within easy distance of settled districts. They have friable soil, and the clearing is very light. It enables a good show to be made in a short time, and I found on going through the soldiers' settlement—for I mixed up personally with the men, I interviewed them personally, I heard their complaints and their commendations, and I say they are pleased indeed with the outlook as far as their prospects are concerned. But there is one particular bright spot in the Bill that they have not in Queensland, and which the soldiers are much disturbed about. Not about our bright spot, but their dark spot. And that is the perpetual leasehold. It was positively being cursed from one end of the settlement to the other. When I spoke to a man, the first thing he told me was that the soldiers thought they were going to get the land but they were done out of it. When a man has paid back his money which has been lent at a small rate of interest, and secured his holding, he at least should have the satisfaction of knowing that it is his own farm.

Mr. O'Loughlen: You said the bulk were satisfied.

Mr. TEESDALE: They are satisfied with the prospects of the chance of making a living, but that is counterbalanced by the grievance that the land can never belong to them. On these blocks, too, they have life sentences imposed on them inasmuch as they have to reside on them permanently. No matter if the soldier is ill and he is not able to carry out his residential qualifications, it is impossible for that man to transfer the holding to his wife. That is another injustice they suffer under. It is unjust to think that because of ill-health a man is unable to carry out the conditions, he is not allowed to transfer the block to his wife, or his son so that they may carry on in his absence and so that he may rest close to civilisation where he can get the facilities and comforts which are not obtainable in the remote settlements in the bush.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The residential qualification is to prevent trafficking.

Mr. TEESDALE: I am calling attention to some of the bad spots in the Queensland Act and the bright spots in ours.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Why pick out Queensland?

Mr. TEESDALE: Because I consider it is a good Bill, barring the leasehold. When the people of Queensland see that Western Australia, which they have copied in a lot of their legislation, has given the freehold, they will immediately cut out the leasehold from their Act.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): How do your constituents get on with the leaseholds?

Mr. TEESDALE: They have been getting on pretty well up to now. In Queensland the soldier can borrow up to £700 on 25 years' terms. It has been stated that this Bill contains provisions for the returned soldier which do not differ from those appertaining to the ordinary settler. I would point out that in the case of the Queensland Act, the soldier can borrow £700 on 25 years' terms with security, but the ordinary settler can borrow up to £1,200 at 5 per cent. The soldier, has to reside on his property practically the whole of his life, or at all events up to the time he has paid for it, whereas the ordinary settler has only to reside on the holding for three years and the residence qualifications do not apply. This shows the difference in the treatment accorded to the soldier in comparison with that accorded to the ordinary settler. The Bill now under consideration is one that can be dealt with by a few decent speakers, who will cover the main points that are contained in it. Anything further than that is repetition, which does no good. I think I have dealt with one or two points that have not been dealt with by other speakers. I hope that is so. I can only say in conclusion that if half the good that has been wished to the returned soldiers by hon. members of this House eventuates, there will not be any cause for grievance against the Government of Western Australia.

Mr. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [8.47]: I desire briefly to deal with one or two aspects of this Bill mentioned by the leader of the Opposition, and also referred to by the member for Avon (Mr. Harrison), namely, the settling of returned soldiers upon pastoral leases. From my long experience in the North-West I think I can safely say that at least 95 per cent. of the people who embark in pastoral pursuits there make a success of the venture. As it seems to be the unanimous wish of the House that our returned soldiers should get the best that it is possible to give them, I think the Government should make a strong effort to place all who desire to go in for pastoral pursuits upon land suitable for that purpose. Unfortunately, most of the best of our pastoral areas have already been taken up.

Hon. P. Collier: Can we not resume them?

Mr. ANGELO: They cannot be resumed for pastoral purposes. There are several areas, one of which I am going to bring under the notice of the Government, where a certain number of our soldiers could be settled. In a short time those settlers, who hold more than a million acres, will have to sell or otherwise dispose of their surplus areas. The Government would, therefore, be well advised to endeavour to acquire these surplus areas in connection with this particular scheme. Outside the fringe of sheep farming areas there is a good deal of cattle grazing country still vacant. This cattle grazing proposition should appeal to us in that fencing wire is not required. Water only is needed upon the property. The shortage of fencing wire will be a trouble so far as sheep breeding is concerned. When speaking last night upon the proposal to build a railway

from Ajana, I mentioned that there were three million acres of vacant country just north of the Murchison river, and between that river and the settled portions of the Gascoyne district. In the opinion of several experts, men who have made a success of sheep farming in the Gascoyne, and who have visited the locality, this is excellent sheep carrying country. It is, however, short of water. According to the report of the Government Geologist, Mr. Gibb Maitland, this territory is within the artesian basin. The only bore so far put down there adjoins the northern area of this particular country. From a depth of 370 feet there is a magnificent flow of potable water running from this bore, at a rate of two million gallons a day. It would not cost the Government very much to sink at least one bore in this area. I think Clause 12 gives authority to do this. If the bore did not prove a success the proposition could be abandoned, but in view of the results which have already been obtained, and taking Mr. Gibb Maitland's report into consideration, I think that such a bore would prove a success, and if so it would enable this three million acres of country to be made available for our returned soldiers. The member for Roebourne (Mr. Teesdale) interjected earlier in the evening that small holdings were not a payable proposition in the North-West. It depends on what he means by small holdings. In previous years, when there was no assurance in time of drought of getting stock away, at least 100,000 acres were necessary in order to make a success of the undertaking. But with meat works assured, as I think we can safely say they are assured in Carnarvon and Geraldton—

Mr. Teesdale: That is not in the North-West.

Mr. ANGELO: From 50,000 to 60,000 acres would constitute a sufficiently large holding to ensure the success of the occupants. In that country it takes about 12 acres to carry a sheep, so that 50,000 acres would enable a man to carry 4,000 sheep, which would keep him and his family in comfort, and enable them to set aside something for a rainy day. I urge upon the Government to earmark this three million acres until they have thought more about it. The opening up of this area would assist us in turning the State more into a sheep-growing country, as most of us desire. It is sheep growing and cattle raising that will bring this State into a sound financial position later on. The leader of the Opposition also mentioned the question of the creation of a board. I do not like the idea. I am sure it will have a tendency to lead to control by the Minister, as the leader of the Opposition has stated. There is also the question of dual control, which has caused so much friction. I have always been of opinion that this repatriation scheme should be under the control of one man, the best man that it is possible to get hold of in the State, who would control the whole of the scheme and be made responsible for it. If it was found that he was not making a success of the venture someone else could take his place. It has been suggested that a Minister for Re-

patriation should be appointed. The trouble is that Ministers and Cabinets are constantly changing, and that there may be a break in the work which perhaps a particular Minister had started to do well. There must be some good business man in the State who could take control of this scheme. Mr. Wm. Paterson, the manager of the Agricultural Bank, comes into my mind. If he could be spared from the bank I think he is a man who would carry out this scheme admirably. He knows the lands of the State as well as, if not better than, any other man. He is also a good business man, and could tell whether any proposition could be made to pay or not. When we come to discuss this question later on I hope the Government will consider whether it would not be better, instead of having the scheme in charge of the Minister assisted by a board, to have a Commissioner appointed, outside of political control as much as possible, to administer it and put it into effect.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister—Nelson) [8.57]: This Bill has been pretty well discussed from all aspects. It is a Bill for discharged soldiers and not for returned soldiers. Many members when speaking do not seem to have noticed that fact. In my opinion this is the best Bill that has been introduced in any State in Australia.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Are you supporting it?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): A great amount of time has been given to the study of Acts which are in operation in the other States. If members will study this Bill carefully, and not speak, as some of them have spoken, after only a cursory glance at it, I think they will retract a great many of the remarks they have made this evening. The leader of the Opposition said that the settlement of our soldiers on pastoral holdings was a very excellent scheme. I cannot agree with him, under present conditions. I would ask that hon. gentleman, also the member for Roebourne (Mr. Teesdale) and the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo), how they think a man could be settled on a pastoral holding with any chance of success with a limited capital of £500. If we had the wealth of the world at our disposal we could then settle them upon pastoral holdings, and in a short time turn them into millionaires. It is impossible to do this with the limited means at our disposal. In many cases the discharged soldiers have been able to suggest a proposition to the Minister in control which has put a different aspect upon things. They have been able to show by proofs that they have friends who are willing to assist them either with the land, or the stock, or by selling them a portion of their pastoral leases on reasonable terms. The result has been that we have already had men settled on pastoral areas with every chance of success, such as they would not have with a limited capital of £500. The leader of the Opposition also suggested that soldiers should be given land free. That is for Parliament to say. If after consideration Parliament decides that soldiers should be given land free, well and good. He also dwelt on the ques-

tion of dual control. This did exist at one time and the results were not good, but to-day we have no dual control. This branch of activity is under the control of the Premier, who is Minister for Lands, and we have the assistant manager of the Agricultural Bank dealing with these men. We have also the Under Secretary for Lands. Those two men deal with this question from the bank point of view and from the lands point of view. Could we have two better men? I do not think so. As to the qualification board, a returned soldier sits on it. I have attended many meetings of the board, and have listened to the questions put to the soldiers and heard the replies; and I can assure the House that those returned soldiers are treated with every courtesy and that every assistance is given them to lay their views before the board. But we cannot allow men to go on the land with this Commonwealth money if, in the opinion of the examining doctors, they are not physically fit for the life. Further, a man must surely have some knowledge of the life he proposes to take on.

Mr. Smith: Cannot you adopt the same precautions with all other settlers?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): Other settlers risk their own money, which is a different thing.

Mr. Smith: Do they?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): These returned soldiers risk Government money.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The other settlers risk the money of the Agricultural Bank; though I do not suppose the Agricultural Bank has any money now.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): Returned soldiers who do not know anything of agricultural work should first go on the training farms, or else go out with a private farmer. The Government take them on at Yandanooka, or Avondale, or Brunswick. Not one returned man up to the present has been willing to go on a training farm.

Mr. Smith: You cannot expect the men to go on the Brunswick farm. They cannot learn much there.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): A man desirous of taking on dairying or fruit growing in the South-West can still obtain the necessary instruction at Brunswick. The leader of the Opposition says that the board should have greater powers; but other members have urged that the board should be abolished altogether. Great diversity of opinion has been expressed. I think the middle course suggested by this Bill is the right course; that is to say, the measure will, under the control of the Minister, be administered by a board. What could be better? If a soldier is not satisfied with his treatment by the board, he can appeal to the Minister. Other members have said that the Bill provides no appeal. But of course any man can always appeal to the Minister. Returned soldiers have already appealed to myself, and I, without even having to refer to the Premier, who is the Minister for Repatriation, have been able to fix them up. It has also been stated that the returned soldier

applicant has to go from one department to another—from the Lands Department to the Agricultural Department, and then to another department, and so forth. That was done in the dark ages; it is not done to-day.

Mr. O'Loughlen: It was so three months ago.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): But all that has been changed. The returned soldier comes along to the Lands Department and walks in, as the member for Northam has said, through the left-hand door, which does not, as suggested by the member for Northam, lead to destruction, but to—

Mr. O'Loughlen: To Willmott.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): Yes; and to what better quarter could the returned soldier go? His views are listened to sympathetically and attentively, and he is then put on the right road. If he desires to take up Crown lands, he is met at once. But how many returned soldiers want to take up Crown lands? Not many. They mostly want to take up improved holdings. We have offered them Crown lands by the thousand acres; but they say, "No; we want an improved property that we can make something of straight away." And quite right, too. If a returned soldier can put up a reasonable proposition, as he frequently does, we purchase the improved property for him, after we have satisfied ourselves that the seller of the property is not charging more than a fair price for it. Never in all my life have I known of so many philanthropists as during the last 12 months. In the Lands Department I have files upon files offering properties. It is really amazing to find how many people are willing to give away their properties for a mere song—in other words, for ten times their value—so long as returned soldiers can be stuck with them. It is my duty, under the direction of the Premier, to see that these men get a fair deal and are not stuck with such properties. That is what I am there for. Suppose a soldier comes along saying he wishes to buy a property which is worth £500. We at once have an inspection made by an Agricultural Bank inspector, and on receipt of that officer's report we go into the matter again. The inspector may say that in his opinion the property is worth only £400. Then we write to the would-be seller asking if he will accept the lower amount, which in very many instances he does. Then we have saved the returned soldier £100 on that deal alone.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Possibly even then the price may be too high.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): I think not; because the Agricultural Bank inspectors are very careful to see that these properties are not over-valued. It is the sins of omission and commission which have occurred in South Australia that make us so careful here.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You have not been too careful here always.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): I have looked up all the cases, and have not known of a single case where a mistake has been made after inspection by an Agricultural Bank inspector. I know of one

particular case, which, unfortunately, was left to one of those bright angels of the member for Northam, a surveyor, to report on. The surveyor had not the necessary knowledge, and the result was that the place was bought, that it was found not to be worth the money paid for it, and that it is coming back to our hands again. Very great care is exercised: that is what I want to impress on hon. members. The member for Northam pointed out what we must do on the wheat belt and what we must do in the south-west. He says the work must be supervised. It is supervised to-day. The chief inspector of the Agricultural Bank frequently visits Riverton. Similarly, Mr. Wickens goes out to see the men who have taken on vine growing. Mr. Scott looks after the men at Harvey. In every case where it is possible, we exercise supervision. To hear some hon. members speak, one would think these unfortunate returned men were simply driven out of Perth on to their blocks and there left to starve. Such is not the case at all. Sustenance is provided for these men by the repatriation department. Over and above that sustenance, they receive a weekly sum, if they so desire, for the work they do on the land—£2 per week additional to the sustenance allowance. Take the case of a man drawing £1 17s. 6d. per week sustenance allowance from the repatriation department, and at the same time drawing £2 per week for work done on his block; that gives him £3 17s. 6d. per week to go along with for the time being. I think everyone must admit that he ought to be able to pull through on that. In addition, he has a house. The £500 of Federal Government money is for improvements. If we purchase for a discharged soldier an estate at £600, the land is valued and the improvements are valued; and only the improvements can be charged up against the Federal £500. The balance has to be advanced from the ordinary funds of the Agricultural Bank.

Mr. O'Loughlen: How is the demand?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): Hot and heavy. All land adjacent to railways should be made available, says the member for Northam. All such land alongside our railways is being inspected with a view to making it available. But Western Australia has a considerable mileage of railways, and it is not all going to be done in a day. However, we have officers out in all directions—north, south, east, west—doing the very work which the member for Northam says should be done. The hon. member urges that more railways should be surveyed in the South-West. But we can at this time spend our money better than in surveying railways either in the South-West or in any other portion of the State; had we unlimited funds to go on surveying railway lines and building them, the proposition would be altogether different. But we are not in that happy state. We have to be very careful about the expenditure of every penny. Undoubtedly various railways will have to be built in the South-West at some time. Before the Nornalup country, and all that country between Manjimup and Nornalup and between Busselton and Cape Leeuwin can be made available, railways will have to be built.

I, for one, would never agree to place returned soldiers in those remote areas without railway communication.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Would you stop them from going there?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): Yes, in this respect, by telling them that if they go there they will go at their own risk, and will not get the advance. If they care to go down there with their own money, then by all means let them go. Some people like that wild, pioneering life; and if they have the money to back up their fancy, let them do so. They can go fishing and bee-farming. The member for Northam says we must not wait until the soldiers return before clearing land for them. That is all very well, but we must not go on clearing as was done at Denmark, and at Manjimup, on the way to the Donnelly River, wasting thousands of pounds through allowing the scrub to grow up again. If one clears land in that country, and fails to follow up the clearing by keeping down scrub and suckers, then in a very few years the land is in a worse state than before it was touched. But to keep the seedlings down costs money, and all that expenditure has to be added to the cost of the clearing. Thus, in the end, the unfortunate man who takes up the block has to pay about 100 per cent. more than the original cost. That was the trouble on the Denmark area, where settlers were charged 25s. per acre for land which to-day is not worth 1s. per acre. It was ringbarked and partly cleared and then allowed to go back to its original state. It is proposed to go ahead with clearing on the Harvey estate, but I am not satisfied with the land on which some of the men were placed. I would like hon. members to know that such glowing reports were put in about that land that anyone would have been perfectly justified in setting it apart for the soldiers. Unfortunately, I did not see it myself.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Who was responsible?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): They were officials, and we cannot sack them because they have already gone. I do not know any better area than the 500 acres at Green Pool and instructions have been issued to clear it. Unfortunately, at the present time, it is costing 100 per cent. more to clear land than should be the case. I am sure that the member for Northam must be satisfied that Mr. McLarty is a suitable officer for the position he holds. The hon. member took exception to soldiers being asked to make statements on oath. If a man is speaking the truth what does it matter whether he makes the statement on oath or not? He is required to take an oath before the board. Certain conditions have been laid down by the Commonwealth in connection with the £500 advance and those conditions are being carried out. It has been contended by many writers that it is not advisable to put soldiers by themselves in groups, but that they should be settled along with the civilian population. At the present land is being held for soldiers who have been discharged, and it is only right that that should

be so. The member for Albany has a most erroneous idea of the Bill. He asks of what use will be the £50,000 which it is proposed to raise. Had the hon. member studied the Bill, and had not his brain been muddled through the bee farmers' complaints, he would have seen for himself.

Mr. H. Robinson: It takes two members of the Cabinet to try to explain it to the House.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): It would take 50 members of the Cabinet to explain it to the hon. member and then they would not succeed. The hon. member would see what it was for if he studied the Bill.

Mr. H. Robinson: Tell us.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): It is really too late to-night to go over all that again.

Mr. H. Robinson: You do not know.

Mr. Hickmott: Can you tell us how to fence in bees with barbed wire?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): I only hope the statements of the member for Albany about the discharged soldiers to whom he referred are as wide of the mark as his comments on this Bill. The hon. member also told us that the Government would not look after the farm of a man who wanted to enlist. In many instances men have enlisted without notifying the Agricultural Bank or the department, with the result that nothing was known about it.

Mr. H. Robinson: The man I referred to asked you to help him and you refused.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): Then there must have been some excellent reason for the refusal. With regard to the hon. member's complaint about the discharged soldier who was engaging in fishing, all I can say is that the Bill provides for settlement on land and not on water. The member for Albany said that it would be only just to revalue properties as they exist to-day and not force an intending purchaser to take over the full debt on a property. That has been done for some time. A property is valued on the improvements as they exist to-day. The hon. member stated that it would be unwise to put men broadcast on poultry holdings. The Government are of that opinion also and it has been decided not to make any more land available at Osborne Park or elsewhere. In connection with this enterprise one must have a sound knowledge of the business. I have reason to know that more bankruptcies have been caused through poultry farms than through anything else.

Mr. Duff: Because they were not started properly.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): The control was handed over to outside men because everyone said if they were run departmentally, they would be a failure. We know to-day whether they have been a success or a failure.

Mr. Duff: They were started with mixed poultry; that was the cause of the failure.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): I have inspected those poultry farms. There are comfortable houses there,

an adequate water supply, good outbuildings, and everything that should make that kind of business a success. There were mistakes made at first but I think that they have been eliminated to-day. In addition to the soldier getting his land at half cost, pastoral leases free for five years, as well as sustenance, it is also proposed that the soldier shall get special concession regarding water rates. That will be a great benefit to the men in the dry areas. The member for Avon said that the South-West did not appeal to him. Quite likely. I might say that the district he represents does not appeal to me. It would not do it we all had the same ideas and all wanted the same land. It is by having diversified ideas that we can hope to populate this huge country from Wyndham in the north to Albany in the south. I am not allowed to refer to minerals, but if I were I would state that 42 men have been sent out. The member for Roebourne gave the Bill a pat, and it was really very nice indeed after hearing some of the disparaging remarks from some other hon. members, to find that one at least had sufficient intelligence to realise what the Bill contained. The hon. member has taken a great interest in this work and he helps where he can in smoothing matters over. I hope hon. members will always do this. When men come along with grievances to the Lands Department we see whether we can overcome them. We do not irritate these people and make them worse. The member for Gascoyne told us that 4,000 sheep would provide a comfortable living for a man, I quite agree with him, but where are the discharged soldiers going to get a run which will carry 4,000 sheep, the necessary fencing, the necessary water supply, and the sheep? Are they to get all out of the £500? If the hon. member has any scheme in mind by which we can provide pastoral areas with 4,000 sheep and the necessary adjuncts, I shall be pleased to hear of it.

Mr. Chesson: Give them 500 sheep for a start.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister:): The member for Gascoyne also stated that in his opinion one man should control this scheme, that he should be beyond political control, and that it should be taken out of the hands of the Minister and the board. Fancy handing over to one man a scheme which may involve the expenditure of 20 millions of money. I do not think he would see it out. Certainly it would not be very long before he would either be shot, or die from attempting to do impossibilities, or else he might clear out with most of the money. Many discharged men do not quite understand what can be done. I have interviewed many of them and I have written to others and I have been able to enlighten them. Those men to-day have been fixed up and they are now desirable and contented settlers. In conclusion I would point out that this is a practical scheme, and not a scheme to see how much can be done in the way of flag-flying. It is no good hon. mem-

bers saying what they would do if they had the opportunity. Let them come along and say what can be done with the amount of money we have at our disposal and knowing the difficulties we have to contend with. Let us have a practical scheme and not try to out-vie each other to show how much anyone might be prepared to do more than members sitting on the right or the left of the Speaker. I give way to no man in what I would like to do for returned soldiers. But I know, perhaps better than many others, just how far we can go, and just what we can do with the money at our disposal. We must never forget that we are the custodians of this money for the Commonwealth, and responsible for its disposal and for the security. If the security is not good, the Commonwealth will throw the blame on us, and we shall suffer the loss.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is purely a loan.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister:): And being a loan it is entrusted to us, and like all loan moneys should be expended as wisely as possible. I hope hon. members, if they cannot agree with all the provisions of the Bill, will endeavour to amend it in Committee for the betterment of our soldiers; but I trust that members will be careful when amending the Bill that they do not amend it to the detriment of the discharged soldiers.

[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [9.31]: Had it not been for the concluding remarks of the Honorary Minister I should not have spoken on the Bill. We know that the sum of £500 is to be advanced to each returned soldier settling on the land. The Honorary Minister has said that we are the custodians of that money for the Commonwealth. I think it is about time the people learned that such is not the position. It is time the people realised that all the Commonwealth is doing in this matter is to pay half the difference between 3½ per cent. and the rate at which the money is to be raised. It is true that the Commonwealth is acting on our behalf in raising the loan to finance the soldiers settled on the land under the Bill; it is true also that the Commonwealth is printing bank notes and will charge us probably 6½ per cent. for them, but it should be made clear that the State is providing the money, just as it is in the case of the capital of the Agricultural Bank.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister:): But we get a recoup.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: By way of loan, and loan only. If the soldiers settled on the land do not repay the money, the State will have to find it. The only difference is that for the first few years, until, increasing by one-half per cent. per annum, the interest shall have been raised to the full rate, the Commonwealth is to pay half the difference. I regret very much that it has come to be generally believed that the Commonwealth is doing everything. As a matter of f-

side the Repatriation Department, which does not deal with the settlement of returned soldiers on the land, the Commonwealth is doing nothing. The whole of the responsibility is thrown on the State. I agree that if the Commonwealth will not do it, it is the duty of the State to carry on repatriation, whether it be in regard to land settlement or in some other direction. There is in the Bill an innovation under which the Government can lend money for the purpose of settling persons on private land. I do not know the reason for this, nor do I know what action will be taken, whether or not private lands can be handed over to the soldiers and the value of that land charged by the owner to the soldier plus a large interest. Be that as it may, every soldier settling on the land is entitled to £500 for the purpose of improving that land. I think it is the first time the State, through the Agricultural Bank, is empowered to advance State money for the improvement of private property.

The Premier. It is property belonging to the returned soldier.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): And mortgaged to the Agricultural Bank.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It states here "private property." The Ministers have not explained what it means. If the land is purchased from the private owner by moneys advanced by the State, then the mortgagee is the State. From the reading of the clause it appears that the equity of the land may be owned by the soldier but the property still belongs to the private owner and is to be improved out of money provided by the State. The money has to be spent on improvements.

Hon. J. Mitchell: No.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Honorary Minister told us that to-night.

The Premier: Oh no. Some of it will be spent on implements.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is useless lending a man money for implements unless you lend him also money to work his land. We had a case a few days ago, in which the Industries Assistance Board had lent money for cropping. I admit it was done under the previous Government; but unfortunately the State lost that money. Now, under the Bill, for the first time the Government are empowered to lend money on private properties. Of course this may have reference to the Midland Railway Company, or the Hampton Plains Company, or some other of those private companies holding large areas which the State desires shall be utilised. I hope that in Committee a satisfactory explanation will be forthcoming in regard to that particular provision.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore—in reply) [9.38]: In regard to the remarks of the member for North-East Fremantle, let me say that when we get into Committee I hope to be able to satisfy even the hon. member that the provision he has referred to is a wise one, devised solely in the interests of the returned soldiers. The hon. member said he had never seen this provision in any other measure. It has been borrowed from

the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Acts of the other States.

Mr. Draper: Which State?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Victoria.

The PREMIER: And, consequently, I think the House may judge from this that considerable thought has been expended on the provision. Moreover, the Victorian Act was passed a considerable time ago, and no objection has been raised to it. That provision still remains. All these matters can be explained in Committee, when I feel sure I shall be able to satisfy the hon. member that we are on safe grounds in regard to that provision. I am sorry that hon. members have not received the measure with that sympathetic support which I could have desired. I am afraid that their natural feelings in regard to the returned soldiers have influenced them in criticising the measure somewhat severely. All hon. members desire to do the very best they can for the returned soldiers, and I am afraid that their enthusiasm in that direction has impelled them to unduly criticise the measure. Exception has been taken to the fact that it is necessary that the discharged soldier wishing to go on the land should have certain qualifications, that he should be passed as fit before being granted the assistance provided in the Bill. The member for Northam said that the ordinary settler could go on the land without any such test. I go further and say that the ordinary settler can buy a piece of land with just as much facility as he can go into a shop and purchase a yard of cloth. All that is necessary is that he should go to the department, look up a plan, make an application, and the thing is dealt with. But in our soldiers we are dealing with an entirely different class of men. These men have been to the front, and in most cases will not be physically fitted for the work. Some of the men who in the past have applied for land have not been physically fit, and in consequence have failed. But I can assure hon. members that the Soldiers' Qualification Board has been most lenient in its examination of the returned soldiers. Not any man has been refused if he had the slightest chance of making good. Unfortunately, applications have been made by men whom it would be suicidal to place on the land. As time goes on, I hope we shall be in a position to give those men who have a taste for the life some opportunity of trying whether they are really physically fit for the work. It will be better for them to try somewhere other than on a holding of their own, and I have in mind a scheme under which we might be able to place those men on some large area, under proper control, where they will be able to demonstrate on the spot their ability to carry on the work. Much has been said in regard to pastoral leases for returned soldiers. I should like the returned soldiers to obtain pastoral leases if they so desire. Hon. members are aware that the areas available for pastoral leases in the State are not very great in number. Notwithstanding this, wherever there is an application from a man who is desirous of taking up this class of country, every assistance is afforded to him by the Repatriation Department. I do

not like the term Repatriation Department. It leads to confusion in the minds of hon. members, because we have nothing to do with the question of repatriation in the proper acceptance of the term. All we have to do is to settle men on the land. We are desirous of settling as many as wish to go in for pastoral pursuits, and much has already been done in that direction. I should like members to get out of their minds the idea of destroying those great sheep stations which we have in the North-West, and of putting possibly inexperienced people upon them in place of the present experienced holders. We have built up in Australia the finest breed of merino sheep in the world, a class of sheep that is the envy of the world. We have built up a flock of sheep which furnishes the finest wool in the world, and Australia is very much enriched by this fact. If those areas are cut up, and the sheep breeding put into the hands of novices, we would, I am sure, have our great merino flocks destroyed. Those who have built up these flocks have done so by a lifetime of study. It is not easy to build up a merino flock. This has only been done by great industry and study on the part of those engaged in the work. I should be sorry to see these flocks broken up. During the last 20 years a great deal has been done in Western Australia in the way of sheep breeding, and it would be most regrettable that anything should be done to destroy this industry by taking away from those who hold these pastoral leases and giving them to novices, those areas upon which they have done such magnificent work.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Mr. Lambert: The aggregation of this enormous territory is not justified.

The PREMIER: These are my views in regard to the matter, and I trust members will not permit such a thing to take place. I am also desirous of giving the returned soldiers every opportunity that we can find, where we are dealing with men who possess some knowledge of sheep and cattle raising, to take up land in our great pastoral country. The criticism which has been levelled at the Bill has, I feel sure, been levelled at it out of regard for the returned soldiers. I do not think members have criticised it simply from a desire to oppose the Government in the matter, or from a desire to harass them in the passing of this measure. I am sure all hon. members look upon it as outside of party matters, and are desirous of dealing with the Bill with the sole object of benefiting those men who return from the Front, at the same time protecting the interests of the State. Hon. members have said that there are no benefits under this Bill which cannot be obtained without the Bill, and that we do not need it. The Government have been criticised for a long time for not having brought in a measure of this description. Now that we present this Bill we are told by some hon. members that it is not necessary. I believe that those officers we have in the Lands Department are quite capable of dealing with the returned soldier even with-

out this measure; at the same time they are desirous of having the Bill so that the interests of the returned soldier shall be protected as far as possible. There is no dual control in this matter, although this was strongly emphasised by some hon. members. I have broken down this dual control. I have an officer of the Lands Department controlling the settlement of discharged soldiers, and an officer of the Agricultural Bank, together with the Under Secretary for Lands, is working this system. Members have also said that the board's recommendation need not be carried out by the Agricultural Bank, and that there is therefore likely to be a block. The reason for placing Mr. McLarty in charge of the settlement of discharged soldiers was that we might have someone there who was absolutely in close touch with the Agricultural Bank. We have entire confidence in the general manager of the Agricultural Bank, and Mr. McLarty has been that gentleman's understudy as assistant manager. Because of this, hon. members will see that there is a strong link binding together the Lands Department branch of the settlement of discharged soldiers and the financial part of the scheme as controlled by the manager of the Agricultural Bank.

Mr. Pickering: Are you not operating on the funds of the Agricultural Bank?

The PREMIER: We are, but we are first operating on the £500. The Agricultural Bank is the banker and holds the money.

Mr. Pickering: In trust?

The PREMIER: The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) was right in saying that the money did not belong to the Commonwealth Government. This is merely money borrowed by the Federal Government and loaned to the Western Australian Government. We are responsible for it and have to pay interest on it. The only thing is that the difference between the interest in the early stages and the interest at which the money has been actually borrowed, will be partly borne by the Federal Government and partly by the Western Australian Government. Beyond that the Federal Government have no responsibility. We are dealing with a big financial matter on this question. No matter how sympathetic we may be, and how much we may be inclined to allow ourselves to be carried away by sentiment, we have to endeavour to deal with this question in a businesslike way. While assisting a discharged soldier, and endeavouring to settle him in comfort on the land, we have to see that the interests of the taxpayer, who finds the money, and the interests of the State, are protected. This will be done. The returned soldier will be treated as sympathetically as possible, and every endeavour will be made to place him in that niche for which he is suited, and not into that for which he is unsuited. The Bill is mainly a Committee Bill. I trust that in Committee it will be considered in all its aspects in the interests of the returned soldier, and without any warmth except out of a desire to help those men who wish to settle on the land, and whom we desire to make homes for themselves and a competence which will give them happy lives in this country, to which they have

returned, and which they have so nobly assisted in defending.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1, 2—agreed to.

[Mr. Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

BILL—AGRICULTURAL LANDS PURCHASE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 10th October.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [10.0]: After having looked carefully through the Bill I have come to the conclusion that, with the exception of one or two slight amendments which are necessary to the parent Act, a large number of the clauses contained in it are really unnecessary. In moving the second reading of the Bill, the Premier pointed out that it was necessary not only in the interests of the State but of the soldier that the very large areas of land which adjoin the railway system, and which are at present not being utilised, should be brought under cultivation. He gave us to understand that in this Bill he had made special provision for compulsorily acquiring land for the settlement of our soldiers. In this State there are not many persons who hold land of any considerable area in the agricultural districts, and to whom, therefore, the compulsory clauses of the measure would apply. In fact, the Bill will not apply at all to any land under £10,000 in value. After examining the areas of land held in various parts of the State, it is safe to say that very little land indeed which is required for the settlement of soldiers can be compulsorily purchased under this Bill. Take, for instance, the Avondale estate, which consists of about 10,000 acres and cost about £50,000. To compulsorily purchase a similar estate for soldiers' settlement under this Bill would be impossible, because the Bill provides a right to the owner to retain of his estate a certain area proportionate to its value; that is to say, its unimproved value. In the case of an estate such as the Avondale, the value of the improvements would be so much as to render the acquisition of the estate by the Government impossible except by way of arrangement. The Premier told us that certain powers proposed by this Bill have been in the Railways Act for some time, and that the Government were already in a position to compulsorily acquire land within 15 miles of a railway.

The Premier: Within two years of the construction of the railway.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The hon. gentleman also said that that provision of the statute had never been availed of.

The Premier: That is so.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The principal reason for that is the wording of our Public Works Act, under which the land would become compulsorily acquired. In New Zealand the Government have power, if they so desire, to acquire land by paying the taxation value placed on the land by the owner himself, plus ten per cent. But here we have no provision of a like nature. In almost every instance where the Government have acquired land at all, they have had to pay considerably above its value. The Premier, by this Bill, seeks to do away with valuation by assessors, and to compel an appeal to the Supreme Court instead of to the valuation court. In about 90 per cent. of the cases where land has been acquired compulsorily and the matter has been referred to the valuation court, the Government have had to pay considerably above the fair value, and in some cases double the value placed on the land by its owner for taxation purposes. The Government required certain land at Midland Junction for a marshalling yard. That land was owned by a well known resident of Midland Junction, Mr. Morrison, and was only a small piece. For taxation purposes Mr. Morrison had valued it at £80. The court awarded £109. Similarly Mr. Hummerston held some land which it was necessary for the Government to resume. He valued it at £120; the court awarded £380. Again, Mr. Shaw, of Fremantle, held land which was needed by the Government for public works. His valuation for taxation purposes was £2,500. The court awarded £4,000. When the Government required other land the claim was for £4,086, and the court awarded £3,954. The owner's value for taxation purposes was £1,000. I could go on quoting instances all showing clearly that on nearly every occasion when the Government find it necessary to acquire land compulsorily they have to pay far above its value. For the period 1911 to 1915 there were claims made on the Government for land compulsorily taken, amounting to £331,860. The total amount valued by the Government was £420,446. Moreover, a large number of claimants settled with the Government, while the others went to court. The court decided that the Government must pay £78,000 or £79,000 more than the Government thought the fair value of the land. Thus we recognise the difficulty which would ensue if land required for soldiers were compulsorily acquired; there would be no possibility of fixing the price of that land for some considerable time after the soldier had taken it up. The Public Works Act, under which the land would be acquired, allows the owner of the land two years to give notice of any claim, and thereupon action must be taken within twelve months. So there is the possibility of a delay of 2½ years or three years after the soldier is settled on the land before he knows what is the value of the land. I do not think the compulsory clauses of this Bill are worth anything at all for the purchase of agricultural lands. Until we alter our Public Works Act to correspond in this respect with the New Zealand Act, which I

have described, it would be useless to acquire any land compulsorily for the purposes of land settlement. As the Premier says, this is principally a Committee Bill. However, I was much surprised to discover at the very commencement of the measure that very little care had been taken in its drafting. There are sections quoted which are entirely wrong. They refer to the wrong places. There is Clause 3, for example.

The Premier: What is the error?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It refers to the wrong provision of the principal Act. The Premier said he did not think it necessary that a board appointed to examine lands of which the repurchase by the Government was contemplated should also inquire and report whether there were any Crown lands in the immediate neighbourhood available for settlement. The Premier said, "We have that information already in the office, and there is no necessity for such a matter to be reported on by the board." The Honorary Minister for Lands to-night said, "We have splendid reports from the officials in regard to the area at Harvey." Yet he said he considered those reports entirely wrong and misleading. If we have large areas of Crown lands in any given district, and it is therefore not necessary to repurchase estates, the price of which is swollen by two-thirds. Next we find that the Minister wishes to retain the right to say, in regard to inspection of estates, what members of the board should inspect. I agree with the Premier that it is necessary to increase the number of the members of the board. I also agree with him that there has been in the past some difficulty regarding the Land Purchase Board, because the whole personnel of the board has been chosen from one area of Western Australia. In the past nearly every member of the board has been taken from the eastern districts, and none of the members knew anything whatever about the value of the south-western districts. When an estate is offered to the Government for re-purchase, and the Government consider the estate worthy of inspection, the board themselves should be the authority to say what member or members of the board should report on that estate. There may not be anything in this, but it is often alleged that in connection with the repurchase of estates political influence is used.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): You see the object of that, too.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I see the object of that. If the board themselves decide who shall be the members to report, it will largely remove or obviate accusations of political influence.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): But you can see the absurdity of bringing a man down from Geraldton to sit on a board.

Hon. P. COLLIER: A member of the board drawn from the South-West and asked to value south-western land might be interested in upholding the value of such land,

because he himself owns land in the South-West.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It will relieve the Minister for Lands if the board decided who should report, and then there would be no accusation that the Minister chose the very ones he wanted to go and report. It would also relieve the Minister of responsibility if the whole thing were referred to the board to decide. I find very little improvement in the measure so far as assistance to soldiers is concerned. The principal gain to a discharged soldier is the fact that he has 15 years longer in which to pay for his land, but when we come to the question of assistance, the Bill at the first glance makes one think the soldier is going to get special privileges. But there is nothing definite at all in the Bill. In every instance the Minister may do this, that or the other thing. The Minister has also the opportunity of differentiating in regard to returned soldiers. He may, if he so desires, relieve the soldier of the first half-year's instalments; he may, if he desires, relieve him of the payment of interest on the value of the land and only charge survey fees and cost of the improvements; he may, if he desires, relieve the soldier from the payment of interest in the first year, or he may relieve him of the payment of any interest or instalments for the first five years. It shows clearly therefore that there is nothing definite laid down in the Bill. The whole thing is left in abeyance. The Minister may say that he will allow the matter to stand over for 12 months without interest, while to another soldier he may say "You shall have five years in which to pay" and yet to another "You shall only pay for the surveys and improvements for the first 12 months." And so differential treatment may be meted out from start to finish.

Mr. Teesdale: Must there not be discretionary power in certain instances?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is far better to have it laid down definitely. If the Bill has been brought in for the express purpose of providing special privileges to returned soldiers in connection with the repurchased estates, it is much better that the soldiers should know definitely before they approach the Minister or take up the land, what they can get.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): You must give them the opportunity of taking up the land on 25, 30 or 40 years' terms.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Bill provides for not exceeding 40 years. We must bear in mind that the repurchased estates have cost us close on £1 per acre, and on that land the soldier has to pay at the present time 6½ per cent. and another one per cent. in addition. Then over and above that, on the money advanced to him by the State he has to pay for the first year 3½ per cent., in the second year 4 per cent., in the third year 4½ per cent., and so on until it reaches 6½ per cent. How is it possible under such conditions for a soldier to undertake to pay in the first five

years? It is an impossibility. I regret that the Premier has not included a provision in the Bill to deal with those areas which were taken up by individuals, areas in excess of what they actually required. There are many people in this State who took up considerably more land than they intended to utilise and a clause might have been included in the Bill to give those people an opportunity to put that land under cultivation, in default of which it should be taken from them, payment being made at the same rate at which they secured it from the Crown and no more. If that were done, we could go with some confidence to the soldiers and say, "We are handing over to you this land which is close to a railway and on which there is a great possibility of your succeeding in making a livelihood." But it is a mistake to resume land where only a small portion has been improved, where buildings have been erected on one part of it only, and on which interest at the rate of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. would have to be paid and then expect soldiers to make a living on it. We are aware that many complaints have been made by settlers who have taken up land which has been repurchased by the State, and it is necessary to relieve that difficulty. A period of 10 years has been added to the time for payments and that will assist to a large extent, but with interest and sinking fund added, the cost of the land has been increased 100 per cent. What I mean to say is that those people who have taken up land from the Government will have to pay 100 per cent. more than it cost the Government.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): That is bound to be.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: How then can we ask soldiers under a Bill of this description to take up areas on repurchased estates and pay interest on the capital which has been invested and expect them to immediately make the land productive? Except in very few settlements, and then on very small holdings, can any improvements be carried out. The Yandanooka estate cost £1 per acre or £140,000.

The Colonial Treasurer: It cost £62,000. The other portion of it is leasehold.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Many of the other estates which we repurchased cost £3 and £4 per acre. Narra Tarra cost over £2 an acre.

The Colonial Treasurer: Yandanooka cost £1 an acre all round.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Premier told us the other day that it was intended to reduce the price of land at the Yandanooka estate so as to enable soldiers to settle on it. The interest in that case is 4 per cent., but under the Bill soldiers will have to pay $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

The Colonial Treasurer: Why?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Because under the Local Inscribed Stock Act the interest is $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

The Colonial Treasurer: They can easily arrange for the purchase of 4 per cent. bonds.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I notice that in Queensland they have provided that in connection with all lands purchased for soldiers the debentures shall only carry 4 per cent. interest. The Bill before us provides that

the prescribed rate shall be that provided for under the Inscribed Stock Act, and then it says also that it shall be increased by 1 per cent. above that. There is no need to say any more except to again express regret that the Premier has not made it compulsory to acquire land from persons who hold it without any intention of improving it and paying for it what the holders originally gave to the Government.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [10.29]: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and negatived.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

House adjourned at 10.30 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 22nd October, 1918.

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

[For "Papers presented" see "Minutes of Proceedings."]

BILL—FRUIT CASES.

Introduced by Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister) and read a first time.

NOTICE OF MOTION—HONORARY MINISTER, HON. C. F. BAXTER, WANT OF CONFIDENCE.

Hon. H. CARSON (Central) [4.32]: Is the motion of which notice has been given by Hon. A. Sanderson, "That the Honorary Minister (Hon. C. F. Baxter) does not possess the confidence of the members of this House," in order?

The PRESIDENT [4.33]: In reply to the hon. member I would inform him that it is not part of the business of the Legislative Council to express confidence or want of confidence in any member. As there is only one Honorary Minister, and his conduct is impugned, the motion becomes a personal attack and is improper. A substantive motion may be framed on some matter of public business, on which the judgment of the House can be taken. I disallow the motion in its present form.

Hon. A. SANDERSON (Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.35]: This places me in a difficult position.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member can only move that my ruling be disagreed with.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: May I speak to that?