

Legislative Assembly,*Wednesday, 14th August, 1929.***ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.***Ninth Day—Conclusion.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon.

M. F. Troy—Mt. Magnet) [4.34]: During the debate there have been no criticisms of the Lands Department calling for any lengthy reply, but references that have been made by hon. members require attention, and I propose to reply to such remarks during the course of my speech. The most encouraging features in our development to-day are the great demand for land, and the manner in which alienated land has been brought into production. The Lands Department have concentrated upon the classification and survey of areas. The demand for land remains unsatisfied, and will continue to do so while cheap and productive lands are available in the country. The classification of considerable areas has been finalised, and all this land has been surveyed and made available for settlers, who are actively engaged upon its development. The demand for land in the wheat belt, particularly, has shown no abatement; but owing to large areas being held from selection pending finalisation of matters connected with the 3,500 farms scheme, the land available within the last few months has been somewhat restricted. During the first months of the financial year many hundreds of surveyed blocks were thrown open for selection. Under conditional purchase the number of holdings approved during the last financial year was 2,601, for a total acreage of 2,616,763 acres. This represents a considerable increase on the approvals for the previous financial year, the figures of which were: applications approved 2,172, total acreage 2,146,704 acres. Pastoral leases granted during the expired financial year numbered 179. Partial applications during the same year numbered 199, for an area of 14,177,802 acres. Here again there is an increase over the previous year's figures, which were 161 approvals for 11,096,832 acres. The number of new settlers for the year was 1,433, being an increase of 377 settlers over the number for the previous year. The close classification of the country between Southern Cross and Salmon Gums, which was undertaken 18 months ago in connection with the proposed scheme of development, has been completed, and full in-

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

QUESTION—SEWERAGE, SEPTIC TANKS.

Mr. **NORTH** asked the Minister for Works: 1, Is he aware that the Claremont and Cottesloe local authorities were advised during his absence in England that they might prudently continue the installation of septic tanks? 2, Is he aware that both local authorities have discontinued operations pending further information of the Government's deep sewerage proposals? 3, Will he clarify the position by declaring his intention during the session?

The **MINISTER FOR WORKS** replied: 1, Claremont Road Board and Claremont Council were supplied with plans showing areas where septic tanks might be installed as it was not likely that the proposal for a permanent sewerage system for these areas would receive serious consideration for years. 2, Yes. 3, It is impossible to lay down a definite policy for years ahead. The situation is entirely controlled by the amount of money available.

formation has been made available to the Development and Migration Commission. The classification of the country from Lake Hillman, northward to the Murchison railway, and of that great area lying east of the Wongan Hills railway, has been completed, and attention is now being given to development. I am indeed disappointed that the classification of that area does not show a much larger acreage of good land, but there is a considerable acreage around Lake Hillman, which has been surveyed and will be made available in the course of a month or two. I hope that the remaining land in that area will be taken up as grazing farms, for which it is specially adapted. A close classification of the country between Dartmoor and the Murchison River was completed during the last financial year. Three parties of surveyors have been despatched to this area to subdivide it for settlement. Four survey parties are engaged in the pastoral areas, fixing starting points and obtaining topographical information to enable selection to be made easily in new country. It will therefore be seen that the Lands Department have had a very busy time during the financial year just closed, and this activity will be reflected in the returns from land revenue during the current financial year. Agricultural Bank approvals for the financial year just ended totalled 2,306, for total advances of £905,095. Advances for clearing purposes have been granted to the extent of £605,094, to clear an area of 564,807 acres. For other purposes there has been advanced £300,001. The number of new clients accepted by the bank during the year was 859. A good deal of light land development is now going on, and in this respect Agricultural Bank advances are being made up to 50 per cent. of the value of the improvements. During the term of the present Administration the Agricultural Bank have decided to make advances to purchasers of fertiliser for topdressing areas, and some thousands of pounds have been advanced for that purpose. An air of prosperity now pervades the South-West, in view of the great improvement resulting to the pastures from the application of fertiliser for topdressing. The policy now being carried out by the bank will be extended, and I hope it will mean a rapid development of the south-west of Western Australia, as also of that portion of Western Australia lying between the South-West and the Great South-

ern area, which can be rapidly developed under pasture and by topdressing with fertiliser, the country thus being brought into swift production. A few years ago the Government of Western Australia lent a large sum of money to assist the establishment of freezing works at Fremantle. The works are now in existence, and I hope that this year, with the assistance given by the Agricultural Bank towards topdressing in the portions of the country to which I have referred, the works will be actively engaged. I trust, also, that when the works are in operation large numbers of lambs will be raised in Western Australia from country specially suitable for that purpose. On the wheat belt proper, special advances for fallowing have been made in necessitous cases, the rate of advance being 10s. per acre, which represents 6s. per acre for ploughing and 2s. for each of two cultivations. Approximately 20,000 acres of fallowing at these rates have this year been provided for. I have heard some hon. member claim that this fallowing policy was previously suggested, but I had never heard of it. I have consistently advocated fallowing; in fact, I have always strongly insisted upon the principle of fallowing. When I came into office I talked to the trustees of the Agricultural Bank time after time on the subject, and the policy has been adopted. In the Salmon Gums district, which you, Mr. Speaker, represent, loans have been made available for fallowing a total area of 56,000 acres. In my opinion, the principle of assisting in fallowing in that area will be the means by which it will come into its own. Without such assistance it would probably remain undeveloped for years to come, and the State in consequence would not have reaped any benefit from it. Hon. members will be interested in the progress of the miners' settlement at Southern Cross, because it largely represents an experiment under which men who were badly affected with dust and had been worn out in the mines, were given an opportunity to make homes for themselves and their families and were found suitable occupation. The cleared area in this settlement now approximates 24,000 acres, the work having been affected at an average cost of 27s. 6d. per acre. That clearing, I am glad to say, has been done mainly by the miners themselves,

miners who were sent down from the goldfields; and I am happy to say that their health is much improved. When one realises that that clearing was done at an average cost of 27s. 6d. per acre, one can hardly understand how it comes about that men, workless in the city, are not prepared to take clearing but say that they cannot make a living at it at 30s. per acre.

Mr. Maun: How many miners are in the settlement?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Ninety-three.

Mr. Ferguson: What did you say was the cost per acre?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Twenty seven shillings and sixpence. About 20,000 acres of the area have now been fallowed, and the work is proceeding. The settlement work has been done under the guidance of the Agricultural Bank.

Mr. J. H. Smith: I understand many of the settlers are very dissatisfied.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Dissatisfied? I have not heard it. Of course if the hon. member is looking for dissatisfaction, he is bound to get it.

The Minister for Mines: That settlement is the most satisfied group settlement in Western Australia.

Mr. J. H. Smith: I have heard that many of the settlers there are very dissatisfied.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Fifteen tractors are now engaged upon the work of fallowing at a contract rate of 5s. per acre. An additional 3s. will be allowed for working this fallow under the direction of the inspectors of the Agricultural Bank. The work of cultivation will immediately proceed when the ploughing is finished, and will be continued according to the season. As I have already said, there are 94 blocks in that settlement, 88 being in effective occupation. Some of the settlers, of course, are still suffering in health, and in consequence they require further time to take up occupation of their respective areas. The goldfields water scheme has been extended to the settlement at various points, and the building of two schools is approaching completion. So the settlers, it will be seen, have taken up occupation permanently, and my great hope is that they will prove entirely successful. In Forrestania, referred to last night by the member for Yilgarn (Mr. Corboy) the area chopped down is 14,750 acres. This work has been put in

hand merely in order to help the unemployed. It is done under the guidance and control of one of the best agricultural inspectors in Western Australia, Mr. Birt. I doubt very much the statement made by the member for Yilgarn last night, when he said this work had been slummed, for I do not think Mr. Birch is the kind of man who would allow the slumming of any work under his control.

Mr. Latham: Quite right.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is a pity people are so ready to give ear to rumours. If you want to hear something bad about anything, you can hear it very easily. My public experience has taught me that at least 99 per cent. of the rumours heard are inaccurate. Of this area cut down, 1,860 acres have been burnt and 912 acres picked up. I did not desire to see this country burnt, because I was afraid that a second growth would come before settlement could take place. I desired to see the timber cut down and allowed to lie. Then when settlement does take place the timber will be lying on the ground, there will be no second growth, and no difficulty about getting a good burning and a cheap effective clearing up. Development is proceeding apace in the new areas settled last year. At Lake King and Mt. Maddern, 2,734 acres have been cleared, and 2,295 acres chopped down. At Lakes Camm and Fox, 2,188 acres have been cleared and 1,036 acres chopped, and at Lake Varley (South), 1,295 acres have been cleared, and 901 acres cut down. The wheat crops in those areas total 3,741 acres. At Lake Carmody and Lake Varley (North) there have been cleared, or partly cleared, 6,000 acres. The member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Doney) referred to what he termed the lack of co-ordination between the Lands Department and the Agricultural Bank in respect of classification of country made available for selection. I have endeavoured to effect this co-ordination, and before this particular country was made available I gave instructions to the Under Secretary for Lands to get in touch with the managing trustee of the Agricultural Bank and to provide that immediately an area was made available for selection the selector should know whether or not the bank would advance on any given block. All this country was settled on that method. When the areas available for selection were gazetted, it was also announced

whether or not the bank was prepared to advance on those locations. The bank has advanced on the locations under review, and the greater portion of the work done in those new areas has been done by reason of the assistance given by the Agricultural Bank to the settlers. The same hon. member referred to the need for developing light country, and complained of the Agricultural Bank's conservatism in this regard.

Mr. Doney: No, I did not complain of the bank's attitude.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He quoted an instance in which the settlers were very successful on light lands, and I gathered that he complained that the bank was not advancing on those areas.

Mr. Doney: No, I did not complain about that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Well I do not know what the member was complaining about. I should like to point out that in this matter the bank's trustees are guided almost entirely by the advice of their field officers. Whenever there is any doubt about a location, the field officer advises the bank that the classification is not as good as that which was tendered by the Lands Department, and he then recommends to the trustees that no advance be made. So, of course, the trustees have to be somewhat conservative. It is only natural in a body of men who, perforce, have to take great risks in the advancing of the people's money. In these circumstances necessarily they lag behind the classifications of the Lands Department. On the other hand, there are now hundreds of properties, one might almost say thousands of properties, on which the bank is advancing, but on which it would have refused to advance only five years ago. So even if the bank will not advance in the first instance, it is quite probable that it will advance later, when experience has shown that conditions are better understood and that the property and the settler are worthy of assistance.

Hon. G. Taylor: The value of our lands is not known even yet.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is so. The member for Yilgarn complained that the settlers in these new areas were not yet provided with railway facilities. It must be remembered that those settlers were not promised immediate railway facilities. When they took up the land, they knew where it was situated: they had all the

facts and they had a guarantee of assistance from the Agricultural Bank, which, I may say, was not always provided to settlers similarly situated in other parts of the State. The hon. member is probably not aware that all settlement in this country is in advance of railway communication, and that it is not possible that the position can be otherwise for many years to come. Settlement in Western Australia has proceeded so rapidly, and so much country has been taken up, that it is difficult to provide facilities for so great a number of settlers. Therefore, settlers going to new areas must realise that for a time at least they will have to put up with the vicissitudes of settlement, and be prepared to make personal sacrifices during their early years. To my own knowledge, the settlers on that vast area of country along the Midland railway and out towards the Wongan Hills line were on the land four or five years before getting a railway. In lesser degree the same thing applied at Bruce Rock, Narembeen, Kondinin and Lake Grace. The member for Wagin (Mr. Stubbs) will bear me out that settlers went out 50 miles from Lake Grace without railway communication, and had to wait some years for it.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They were granted bank advances when their railways were authorised.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But in many cases they were not authorised, and even where such authority was given, the advances were not of a very generous nature.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But work was much cheaper in those days.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The settlers in the new areas have only to wait and in due time they will get their railways; because if any one thing is certain, it is that this Government will try to develop every one of the areas thrown open. When the areas in the Yilgarn electorate were made available for selection, and before they were gazetted, members of the Development and Migration Commission gave the Government an assurance that those areas would be embraced in any scheme approved by them. The project now before the Development and Migration Commission provides for the serving of those areas by railway, and I hope, of course, that the communication will be given to them

just as soon as it can possibly be done. During the year further consideration was given to the devaluation of soldier settlers' securities. The number of debtors to whom it has been found necessary to grant relief now totals 1,397, necessitating the cancellation of £139,545 of their aggregate indebtedness. These losses, of course, are recoverable under the special grant made by the Commonwealth Government in respect of soldier settlement. Mr. Justice Pike recently reported to the Commonwealth Government on the disabilities of soldier settlement. However, his report did not reach my office until to-day, and so I am not able to discuss it. I do not think there are many soldiers in Western Australia dissatisfied with what has been done for them. There are soldiers who complain of the smallness of their locations, but in the main our soldier settlement is sound. That is due almost entirely to the fact that we had large areas of cheap land to offer the soldiers when repatriation was taking place, and so in the main the soldiers, particularly those in the wheat belt, blessed by good seasons, have been able to get very fine crops. I am glad to be able to say that, generally speaking, our soldier settlement scheme has been very satisfactory indeed. Preliminary investigations have been completed regarding the possible railway routes, location of water supplies, and the clearing of tracks in what is known as the 3,500 farms scheme. I do not yet know whether there will be 3,500 farms or 3,000 farms, or 2,000 farms or 4,000 farms. That has yet to be determined when the areas classified have been opened up by communication. But we do know that there is a very large area of country available, and that quite a large proportion of it is very good. To show that the work has not slackened, I may say that in cutting roads and tracks there has been expended in that area £75,000; on railway investigation £10,500 and on the location of water supplies £34,000.

Hon. G. Taylor: You will have them over capitalised if you are not careful.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Oh no. The project is now the subject of investigation by the Development and Migration Commission. The whole question respecting the land, rainfall, cost of farming development, railway facilities, water supplies and roads has been thoroughly investigated. All possible data has been secured and the

scheme now awaits the decision of the Commonwealth and Imperial Governments. The member for Mt. Margaret interjected that the scheme will be over-capitalised.

Hon. G. Taylor: I said, if you are not careful.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In my opinion no land settlement scheme hitherto embarked upon in this country has been the subject of such careful examination. Although definite results can never be accurately worked out, it is very desirable to have an exhaustive examination of the cost and possibilities of land settlement in that part of the State before large areas are settled and great expenditure is incurred that later on might become a liability on the people.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Have you details of the rainfall?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We have. I do not suggest that the rainfall records are dependable, because the records might not have been taken accurately in areas beyond the rabbit-proof fence. Anyone acquainted with the back country knows that the rainfall records are not taken accurately. But so far as possible all the data has been secured. I am sure that nothing has been overlooked, and if the scheme is approved by the Commonwealth and Imperial Governments there ought to be great development in that area in the very near future.

Hon. G. Taylor: Over what period have you taken the rainfall?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Since the erection of the rabbit-proof fence.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We have the rainfall records for Southern Cross, Salmon Gums, Ravensthorpe, Kondinin, on the rabbit-proof fence, and other places. I think soil tests have also been made. If the State Government unaided had had to undertake all this preliminary examination, we might not have been embarking on the settlement of that country. As Minister for Lands, however, I prefer caution when dealing with that area. I do not wish to be associated with any scheme designed to put settlers on country where they might not be successful. I hope the 3,500 farms scheme will be taken in stages and by that system of progression we shall be sure of our progress while the country is being settled.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Was the £150,000 given to us or is it an advance?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is an advance. The increased area under crop last season was approximately 400,000 acres as compared with the previous year. The increased area under fallow was about 300,000 acres as compared with the previous year. The wheat yield last season totalled 33,821,899 bushels, as against 36,370,219 bushels for the previous season. As compared with the previous season there was thus a decrease last year of no less than 2,548,320 bushels. That was accounted for, of course, owing to lack of rain in a considerable portion of the wheat belt during the critical months. This year's prospects are very bright and with a little more rain next month, I have no doubt we shall reap a record harvest because the acreage under crop this year is very much in excess of the acreage cropped last year. The other evening, when the member for West Perth (Mr. Davy) was speaking, he referred to the fact that the present Government's term of office had been marked by a succession of magnificent seasons, and deprecated the fact that the production of last year was not reflected in the finances of the State. If the producers had under crop last year 400,000 acres more than in the previous year and received a production less by 2½ million bushels, is it not reasonable to expect that the settlers suffered loss? They did not get the return and the State suffered in consequence. Yet, according to the member for West Perth, that did not affect the position in the slightest degree. Many settlers did not get a return and the Agricultural Bank did not get its repayments, and so the Treasurer this year had to find money for agricultural purposes that he would not have had to find after a good season. When I remind members that the Agricultural Bank advanced no less than £900,000 in the last financial year, they will understand to what extent the Government are standing behind the general production of the State, and the extent to which Government finance must be affected by a bad season.

Mr. Latham: Can you tell us what repayments were made?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Last year settlers were fairly prompt in their repayments, but this year not much has been received by way of repayments. As-

sistance to farmers to combat the rabbit pest was given during last year by supplying 1,615 miles of wire netting at a cost of £72,878. As members are aware, loans for this purpose are made at the most favourable rate of interest and on easy terms of repayment. Operations under the same conditions will be continued during the present year. Since the inception of the scheme 7,415 miles of netting costing £338,957 have been supplied to 1,791 settlers. The price charged to settlers during the early stages of the scheme was £45 13s. 9d. per mile of wire netting. A subsequent fall in makers' prices permitted of a reduction of the selling price to £44 10s., while a still further and recent fall in the market price has enabled the department to supply netting at £41 10s. per mile. Consequently, in the course of a few years there has been a reduction of £4 3s. 9d. per mile, and it can be said that the cost of production in that respect, at any rate, is being lowered.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Are the Federal Government still helping in that scheme?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. I am glad to say that a considerable quantity of the wire netting is manufactured locally, thus providing employment for a number of men. The local netting is as good as the imported article and the Government have encouraged the local company by placing with them considerable orders. I have read statements in the Press, and have heard members in this House attribute the financial position of the State to lack of efficiency on the part of the Government. Let me give a few instances to show how sound government is affected by the conditions that prevail at the present time due to legacies of our predecessors. It has been asked in this House more than once why the Government have not settled the Herdsman's Lake area. It has been said there are settlers most anxious to get that land. I should like to point out to the House and the country that schemes like the Herdsman's Lake scheme are largely responsible for our present financial position. The Herdsman's Lake area is one of 1,275 acres. The expenditure on drains alone amounted to £101,276, and the interest bill totals £7,407 a year.

Mr. Stubbs: Was the expenditure warranted?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The purchase price of the estate was £13,768 and the total price including the purchase of Perthshire location and sundry expenditure was £14,471. Herdsman's Lake has been subdivided but the demand for it has not been good and the Treasurer has had to find money year by year to pay interest on the expenditure. Yet members say the financial position is due to bad business methods and bad management on the part of the Government. If we have to spend large sums of money on areas that do not prove productive, the Treasurer has to pay away in the form of interest money that otherwise would be available for public works and for providing employment for men out of work.

Mr. Mann: Are not people paying up to £100 per acre for swamp land in the vicinity of Herdsman's Lake.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not know.

The Premier: Nobody is rushing Herdsman's Lake land.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I know that the Herdsman's Lake land has been subdivided and that the areas are now available for selection. If the member for Perth has friends anxious to secure land there, they can be accommodated. Let me make another reference to the question of Government management and efficiency. Turn to the Peel estate. Exclusive of Government expenditure there, the cost of purchasing that estate was £54,987, the expenditure on drainage amounted to £557,459, and on roads to £263,946, while the annual interest bill is £56,089. The Treasurer has to find that money. It should be realised therefore, that if expenditure proves unproductive and the Treasurer has to provide large sums annually to meet interest bills, money cannot be available to provide work for the unemployed. It is time we got down to facts. If the Treasurer called for a list of items of expenditure during past years that do not return a solitary penny and on which he has to provide a large sum of money annually for interest, the House would understand why money is not available for relieving unemployment, building railways and roads, and furthering the work of the country generally.

Hon. G. Taylor: Are you getting no returns at all from the Peel Estate?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We are getting no interest except from a few settlers who are paying on stock and equipment. Yet the expenditure stands at over £2,000,000. In spite of these facts at every turn we hear talk of inefficiency on the part of the Government. The Government have to bear losses for which they were not responsible and the Treasurer has to pay out in interest each year money that should be available to assist the unemployed and carry out necessary works in the country. It is quite clear that many of the settlers cannot yet meet their liabilities. This is one reason why the Treasurer finds himself embarrassed in carrying on the administration of the country on efficient and business lines. In justice to the House I think I should make a reference to group settlement, a project that comes within the administration of my own department. Last session Parliament approved of the appointment of a Group Settlement Valuation Board, in lieu of the general manager of the Agricultural Bank, to value the group holdings. The Board was appointed this year. It comprises Mr. Grogan, who is chairman, Mr. William Johnson, of Manjimup, and Mr. McCormack, of Capel.

Mr. Thomson: A good board.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, and I do not know where we could have got a better one. Mr. Grogan is well known as the Deputy Managing Trustee of the Agricultural Bank. He is an officer of whom this country has the highest regard. He is efficient, capable, and honourable.

Hon. G. Taylor: One of the best.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Mr. William Johnson, of Manjimup, knows the South-West well. He has taken an active interest in group settlement from the very beginning. He has always done his best to make the scheme a success. He is a farmer himself in the south-west, and has a considerable knowledge of the heavy timber country. Mr. McCormack settled in Capel when the Busselton groups were first started. His land is better than some group settlement locations, but no better than a lot of the blocks. When he came back from the war, not being then a very young man, he put his shoulder to the wheel and made good. He has always paid his way. At one time he was for six months

in hospital owing to a nervous breakdown, but he was still able to meet his liabilities. This gentleman was chosen by the Government because of his knowledge of the Busselton area. All the members of the Board are entitled to our confidence. They have assessed 327 holdings, against which an expenditure was chargeable of £1,113,197. These holdings have now been assessed by the Board at a valuation of £359,975, showing a loss of £733,422. The locations assessed by the Board are at Manjimup, Busselton and Peel Estate. There are 92 holdings valued at Manjimup. The expenditure, including interest, was £281,840, and the valuation assessed by the Board was £107,450. At Busselton there were 132 holdings assessed. The expenditure including interest was £525,115, and the Board's valuation was £162,775. At the Peel Estate 103 holdings were valued, against which there was a chargeable expenditure of £306,242. The Board's assessment was £109,550. There is a loss on these assessments, therefore, of £733,422. The average expenditure chargeable against each holding is £3,404, while the average assessment by the Board is £1,161.

Mr. Stubbs: How much of the £3,000 is chargeable to your Government in expenditure upon a block?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I will come to that later. It will be seen that the Valuation Board has made very drastic reductions. They have made a gift to the settlers in some cases of £2,000 or £3,000, and in other cases of more than £4,000. The recoveries under these valuations work out at 34 per cent. If we exclude interest the loss is £514,593. The loss per holding is £1,574, and the percentage of recoveries is 42. The member for Wagin wants to know how this State is affected. Statements have been made in the House and in the Press to the effect that the interest repaid under the Migration Agreement would compensate for the loss incurred on the scheme. The re-valuations on the 327 locations will be some guide as to the ultimate loss likely to be incurred by the State. I have here a statement showing what the losses have been to the State having regard to the interest concessions by the Imperial and Commonwealth Governments. Groups 1 to 16 are not under the Migration Agreement, and therefore are not entitled to any interest concessions. A considerable number of the assessed locations will be found included in the 1 to 16

groups. Out of the 327 locations valued, only 195 carry the interest concessions up to £1,000, but no more. Let me take the rebate of interest on these 195 farms. There is the interest for the first five years of one per cent. charged against the State, and for the second five years it is one-third of the cost. The total rebate of interest to the State by the Commonwealth and Imperial Governments amounts to £75,582. The loss already incurred in the valuations amount to £733,422. If £75,000 is deducted from this sum, there will be a dead loss to the State on the 327 locations of £657,840. The House ought to know what the position is. I am not attempting to allocate the blame. The number of abandoned holdings is 402, and the number of holdings linked up is 441. Abandoned holdings have been made available in sections as determined by the demand. The capital debt has been fixed by the Group Settlement Board with ministerial approval, and the land has been made available for selection under the Land Act, the survey fees being added. The conditions of selection are that principal and interest at seven per cent. are payable over 30 years by half-yearly instalments. A certain rate of improvements must be maintained. No guarantee is afforded that any more assistance will be given. Residence conditions are required. The valuations made by the Board average about £350. The highest valuation is £608, for an area that is well known to the member for Sussex. That area is available to him if he wants it, inasmuch as I think he said he thought very highly of it and would like to get it. There has been an expenditure on the holding of £1,912, and he may show his great faith and confidence in his electorate by purchasing it for £608 and have 30 years in which to pay for it.

The Minister for Mines: You may consider it not sold.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The average price of these properties is about £350 payable over 30 years. A small deposit only is required. For those who want one of these locations they have a choice of a good many. We have disposed of some. Quite a number on the Peel Estate have gone, for out of 71 locations that were open for selection 57 have been taken up. At Busselton

18 were available and nine have been selected.

Mr. Thomson: What was the average price obtained on the Peel Estate?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It was about £350. All the prices are published in the Government Gazette. There has been considerable expenditure upon these holdings. On the Peel Estate the expenditure on 71 holdings was £127,504, not including interest, and we are selling them for £26,320. At Busselton the expenditure was £25,859, again not including interest, and we are selling them for £5,768. There is still a considerable number of blocks available and these are being sold at reasonable prices. Seeing that the Government have expended such a large sum of money in improving these properties we are not prepared to make any further advances upon them. On many of the blocks there are commodious houses, and a large acreage has been cleared. Wells have been sunk, and particularly on the Peel Estate a good opportunity is afforded to men in casual jobs to make a home for themselves. If I were a man engaged in that occupation I should take the opportunity afforded to buy a house and improved farm, one that is fenced, that has a well upon it, has facilities for dairying, the growth of produce and the keeping of pigs and poultry. I have no doubt many of these places will get into such hands, and that eventually we will get some return from them.

Mr. Stubbs: What is the loss to Western Australia on the Peel Estate?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not know just at present.

Mr. Stubbs: I have asked a fair question.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The development of the groups is now proceeding satisfactorily. The pastures are becoming established, and the volume of feed is increasing annually. Unhappily considerable areas of pasture have to be re-seeded. We have an additional 23,000 acres seeded for the first time this year, and 9,500 acres previously seeded require to be re-seeded. Experience has shown that some of this country does not come to the production stage very quickly. It has to be re-ploughed and re-seeded from time to time. I am glad to be able to inform the House that the annual expenditure on group settlements is

diminishing as the groups make progress. As evidence of the progress of the groups to-day, it is interesting to note that there are 103,634 acres cleared, 84,878 acres have been sown with pastures, and 2,362 cottages and 1,920 dairy buildings have been erected. On the groups the cows and heifers total 14,000; there are about 230 bulls and 3,000 horses, and 141 groups have been provided with plant and equipment. That is evidence of what has been done and indicates that the group settlers are progressing well.

Hon. G. Taylor: The figures show that we should soon be getting good returns from the group settlements.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is so. I am glad to say that in keeping with the progress that has been made, the expenditure is diminishing. Whereas to the 30th June, 1927, the total expenditure for the year in connection with group settlement totalled £1,260,883, it fell during the next financial year to £895,901. In the latter financial year the expenditure per settler, including all costs, was £474. For the year ended the 30th June last, the expenditure fell to £615,123, or an average expenditure per settler, including all charges, of £363. Thus the expenditure per settler fell by more than £100 last year and more than £200 compared with the expenditure for the year ended the 30th June, 1927. It will be of interest to state that the result has been largely due to the fact that contract rates are being done away with, and group settlers are farming their locations. For instance, the amount advanced for sustenance and contract work for the year ended the 30th June, 1928, was £368,232, while for the year ended 30th June last the amount was £224,356, or a reduction of £144,000 compared with the amount paid during the previous year. Our seed and manure accounts remain about the same. The cost for 1927-28 was £61,747 and for 1928-29 £61,600. I am also glad to say that the amount expended on foremen's wages and supervision has decreased. Whereas in 1927-28 £166,158 was spent in that direction, during 1928-29 the amount expended under the same heading was £128,812. On the other hand, the expenditure on plant and stock increased from £12,678 in 1927-28 to £62,355 in 1928-29. Hon. members will realise, therefore, that while we are spending more money in buy-

ing stock and plant, we are reducing the expenditure under the other headings I have indicated. Then again, we have reduced the number of field supervisors by one, senior foremen by four, and foremen by 19. I hope that, with a large number of the group settlers going off the scheme and being taken over by the Agricultural Bank, greater savings will be effected in the near future.

Mr. Latham: Have any of the foremen taken over farms?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, one or two. Arrangements are now being made to hand over to the Agricultural Bank, group settlers whose locations have been recently assessed and I hope that this change over will take place soon. There should be no undue delay where Crown lands are concerned, but settlers on repurchased estates cannot be handed over to the bank unless Parliament approves of legislation that will be introduced early this session. Notice has already been given of the intention of the Government to introduce that legislation. The Group Valuation Board valued all holdings on the freehold basis, and it is essential that the Lands Purchase Act shall be amended in order to allow group settlers on the Peel, Bateman and other repurchased estates to have the right to secure the freehold of their blocks following upon the valuations fixed by the board. I hope that Parliament will expedite the passing of that legislation so that the group settlers may be able to secure their freeholds as soon as possible. The board are now proceeding with the valuation of locations where the settlers will reach the 10-cow stage this spring and I am hopeful that the settlers will grasp the opportunity now offering to get away from the scheme and work out their own salvation. In perusing the valuations made by the Valuation Board, I have been impressed by the fact that the valuations arrived at represented largely the advances and sustenance paid to the settlers, and the cost of their buildings. That means to say that group settlers in that position have had made to them a present of loan expenditure that covered the cost of supervision, tree pulling, explosives, fencing material and netting, seed, manure, fodder, general wages charged against the group scheme, insurance, ploughing and horse hire. In one instance, I find that whereas a settler drew for sustenance and contract work about £1,528, his location

has been valued at £1,550. In another instance the settler drew £1,671 and his location has been valued at £1,175. I hope hon. members will realise that the State has given the group settlers a very fair deal indeed.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: In one of the instances you cited the settler has received the equivalent of £300 per year.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That particular man was one of the very early settlers on the groups and that, of course, is a long time ago now. It is generally realised that the work is done now far more cheaply than in the early days of the Group Settlement Scheme. We have cut down the cost considerably and we are bringing the holdings to the cultivation stage at about one-half the cost incurred at the outset. I do not think anyone will dispute that.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Of course, I have seen some of the blocks and there is very little clearing done now.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If there is one thing that sometimes annoys me regarding the attitude adopted by the Leader of the Opposition, it is that he is so dogmatic. He tells us that what we have to do is so and so and if we do that, everything will go on smoothly and everything will develop beautifully. The hon. member must realise now that we have profited by experience. The things that the hon. member said would occur, have not occurred; things that he said were necessary, we have found not to be necessary at all. It is because of the experience we have gained that we are able to do things more cheaply than was possible at the outset.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You are spending money just the same.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Hon. members can just imagine what we would be spending if we continued along the lines adopted by the Leader of the Opposition!

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You would not be spending half of it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: When will the hon. member give up this ridiculous pose of his that he can do things so easily? The hon. member does not know.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: And the Minister does.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I know better than the hon. member now, and I think I always knew better than he. In the early days of the Group Settlement Scheme, I pointed out to the House that

a great error had been made with regard to placing settlers on poor country. I pointed out what would happen. I always knew what the position would be, and had no doubt about it at all. The hon. member should realise that not all the people are fools. They know that it is not possible to reach prosperity by the mere waving of a hand. They know it cannot be done by simply placing men on land and spending a lot of money. Of course, I know that while money is being spent, the proposition is always regarded as a splendid one. I have always been surprised at the attitude adopted by some people in this State. While money is being spent, no matter how poor a proposition may be, they always regard everything as all right. The moment anything goes wrong, and there are some obstacles, people are inclined, to use a vulgarism, to drop their bundle. They are apt to say, "The whole thing is no good; the scheme is doomed." My impression is that under the reconstruction scheme the settlers have a splendid opportunity. I do not say that the State will be reconquered the losses, but I do consider that with the larger areas that the settlers have, they will have a better opportunity to make good in the future. The Leader of the Opposition claimed that they should have smaller areas. From that standpoint we have an example in the Soldier Settlement Scheme, where the men possessed small holdings. The other Sunday I was at the Peel Estate and some of the soldier settlers said, "When are you going to fix us up?" I asked them what they meant, and they replied, "Give us larger areas like the group settlers have been given. We are on small pettifogging pocket-handkerchief blocks of swamp land. Give us enough land to enable us to carry our stock." That is what we have done for the group settlers; we have given them larger areas. The Leader of the Opposition says that smaller areas will be better. They were given small areas in the commencement, but after some years of experience the settlers needed larger areas for success. Had the group settlers not been given bigger areas, they would not be in a position to be taken over by the Agricultural Bank to-day. They would not have been able to carry stock in numbers sufficient to enable them to make a living. On the other hand, under the reconstructed scheme, we can al-

low the Agricultural Bank to take those settlers over with confidence. The group settlers who will be taken over by the Bank will start under reasonably happy auspices. They have a large acreage cleared. Some settlers have more than 100 acres cleared. Their holdings have been stocked to an extent and equipped. They have the necessary dairy buildings and their homes have been erected. They have a splendid home market for their products and the price of butter fats to-day is far greater than ever before in the history of Australia. Before the war, the price of butter was 1s. 1d. per lb., whereas to-day it is approximately 2s. I understand that to-day the butter factories are paying 1s. 8d. per lb. for butter fat. The State still imports large quantities of butter, bacon, cheese, dried milk and condensed milk and, taking it all round, I feel that the opportunities before the group settlers are splendid. As butter production increases and the settlers get larger herds, the prospects of their making good are bright indeed. I am glad to say that the activities of the Lands Department are still in the direction of making as much land as possible available for settlement. We have made great progress in this State from that standpoint. Production is increasing and in every respect we should be pleased that in this, our Centenary year, the progress all round has been so marked. We should have a record wheat crop, which should tend towards lightening the heavy burden that the State carries. Those burdens are such that the Treasurer is entitled to the sympathetic consideration of the House and of the people generally. I think the future of this State will be a happy one and that Western Australia and its citizens will go forward confidently and prosper.

MR. STUBBS (Wagin) [5.44]: It has been suggested that the debate that has proceeded in this Chamber during the last few weeks has savoured much of the forthcoming elections. At the risk of being regarded as one of those who desire to dress the window and to tickle the ears of my electors, I shall attempt to deal with some phases of politics as they appeal to me. In the course of my remarks I will endeavour to evidence fairness in my criticism of politics as I have seen it practised dur-

ing the past 21½ years. One sometimes puts on his considering cap when he reads in the Press that the previous Government were responsible for the expenditure of only a million and a quarter sterling on group settlements, and that since then the figures have grown to several millions. I wish to place myself in this position before the Chamber, that I do not hold myself responsible for the wasteful extravagance that has taken place in the South-West during the past few years. True, it can be charged to me that I sat behind the Government of the day who were responsible for starting large schemes. Some of those schemes, however, were justified and ultimately will prove successful, but no member can altogether face his electors and declare himself to be free from blame when it can be shown that millions have been spent on ventures in the State, some of which did not receive the sanction of Parliament. Enormous sums of money have been spent by different Governments without authorisation from this Chamber. That principle is wrong, and it is about time steps were taken to discontinue the practice. The Minister for Lands, in a very fair and manly speech, told us something about the enormous losses that have been incurred during the past few years. I desire to ask him whether he can inform the House how much money has been lost on the Peel Estate. The reason that prompts me to ask that question is that when operations at the Peel Estate were started, I was one of those who asked some questions concerning it, and I was informed that the sale of firewood on the estate would pay for the cost of the scheme. Now, when we know what the true position is, I desire to dissociate myself from the squandering of money there, though as a member of this House, I suppose I shall have to bear my share of the blame. We are told that the statement about the sale of firewood on the estate paying for the purchase of it, was made without justification. Who was responsible for it? The public will require to know, sooner or later, either from the present Government or the previous Government. An enormous amount of money has been spent, and we have nothing to show for it. If a private individual were to attempt to do business on such lines, he would find himself in the insolvency court in no time. Because it is a State matter,

all the flowers in the garden appear to be lovely, and it seems that very few members of this House care much about the losses. It is no use flogging a dead horse, but unless hon. members put their heads together and determine to profit by the mistakes of the past, we shall not be true to ourselves or to the people we represent. We must see to it that mistakes such as those that have been made in the last few years are not repeated. It is certainly due to the country to know who is to blame for the howling failures of recent years. Am I right or wrong in saying that someone must be responsible for these huge mistakes? I suppose I shall have to take my share of the blame, but I have no hesitation in saying that I am not responsible for the expenditure of a shilling of the large sums of money that have recently been lost to the State. When group settlement was first started, I said to the then Premier from my seat in the House that he should not have all his eggs in the one basket. I said to him, "You can have group settlements in the mixed farming and the wheat areas that will bring you an immediate return, and in that way assist to pay for the development of the South-West." If my memory serves me correctly I was told that the wheat belt was doing well, and could look after itself. For the sake of the State I wish that one half of the money that has been spent in the South-West had been devoted to the opening up of large tracts of land to the east of the Great Southern Railway. I do not support many of the planks of the present Government's platform, but I cannot but pay a tribute to them for what they have done. I desire to be fair in my criticism regarding what has taken place during the last few years. I do not think the present Government had anything to do with the establishment of group settlements. When they assumed office they had either one of two things to do, continue the policy of the previous Government or close down the groups. Seeing that an enormous sum of money had even up to then been spent, the Government preferred to carry on the groups in the hope that in the end the settlements would yield some return to the State. My opinion is that in probably 20 or 30 years' time the State will receive back a large amount of the money that has been

expended in the South-West. In a few months' time we shall all be facing the electors of the State and again it will be a case of the ins and the outs. The Government of the day will naturally endeavour to bolster up their position and declare that all the flowers in the garden are blooming. The other two parties, the Nationalists and the Country Party, will endeavour to blow to smithereens the arguments of the Premier and his colleagues. Party politics in Australia have reached the stage where the elector has to decide the issue, and I ask whether the time is not ripe to knock on the head this game of the ins and the outs. There are many capable, conscientious and honourable men on both sides of this House who could carry on the affairs of the country for years and make the State one of the most successful—if not the most successful—of the Commonwealth. The difference between the two sides of the House is perhaps one or two votes, and certainly not more than three votes have been the majority of the Government. As a unit in this Chamber, I do not sit here night after night without giving some thought to the question where we are all heading, and I wish to emphasise the fact that unless we all profit by the mistakes that have been made during the last seven or eight years, we shall find ourselves in serious difficulties. We are a mere handful of people, just over 400,000, but we collect the enormous revenue of between £3,000,000 and £10,000,000, and with that amount of money, if we cannot square the ledger, then there is something wrong. Do we get value for the money that is spent in the State? That is another question that we must ask ourselves. Fifty or sixty years ago in Warnambool, where I came from, there were many large families. I was one of a family of 14, and at that time land in the Warnambool district was available at about £3 or £4 an acre. There were large families reared on potatoes and milk, and other products from the soil, and all the families lived happily and grew up to be good men and good women. Can anybody tell me that in those days the people were any worse off than are the people of to-day? It seems to me that many people to-day in Western Australia look to the Government for everything. Requests are made to the Government to build schools, railways, roads,

hospitals and other necessities to make life worth living out back. But the Government cannot be expected to comply with everything that is asked for, unless money is raised by taxation and the expenditure is authorised by Parliament. I yield to no one in my desire to see Western Australia take her place beside the other States of the Commonwealth. But there is a difference between Western Australia and some of the more populated States like Victoria and New South Wales in that we have about one-third of the territory of the Commonwealth with a population of a little over 400,000. To develop this huge tract of country which we have inherited, we have borrowed enormous sums of money, in the expectation that the number of our people will double itself sooner or later. If it does not, then Heaven help the Treasurer in adverse seasons when he has demands for financial assistance from all parts of the State and, in addition, has to pay interest and sinking fund on loans. We must honour our obligations; and it behoves the Government of the day, whoever they may be, to see that value is obtained for every pound spent by them. That end cannot be achieved by working 40 hours a week. After all said and done, 90 per cent. of the wealth of the country is the result of production from the soil. The party with which I am associated represent a large section of the outback people, the farmers. I do not desire to detract to the extent of even one atom from the achievements of the brave men who went on our goldfields in the early days, and worked hard and long in order to advance the State and gain a living for themselves. From their efforts Western Australia got its first real start. Unfortunately, however, an ounce of gold taken out of the ground is never replaced. Rain is Heaven's bounteous gift enabling sheep and wool and grain to grow, and assisting the dairying and other primary industries to which we must look for wealth in the near future. I trust that mineral districts outside the Golden Mile will prove payable, and that, hand in hand with agriculture, mining will continue to play an important part in the history of Western Australia. If any member has a right to complain about the alteration of boundaries under the Redistribution of Seats Act, it is the member for

Wagin. A glance at the map shows that the territory now allotted to Wagin is nearly three times as much as it was under the old Act.

Hon. G. Taylor: Some of us have no territory at all left, but are totally abolished, and not a word of complaint out of us!

Mr. STUBBS: I am sorry for that, but it was unavoidable, because for the last 10 or 12 years redistribution has been due.

Hon. G. Taylor: Not that type of redistribution.

Mr. STUBBS: The member for Mt. Margaret must have known that it was only a matter of time when redistribution was bound to occur. Owing to want of capital to develop some of the deeper lodes in the Mt. Margaret district, its population has decreased. Reverting to Wagin, I venture to say that it will require a man with a good deal of energy to cover that electorate during the few months between the dissolution of Parliament and the general election. However, I dare say other members feel that they can make the same complaint. I am not endeavouring to make a political speech in view of the next election, and I would not have referred to this subject but for the fact that the Minister for Lands, half an hour ago, was explaining to the House a development scheme which the Government have brought into operation, and on which I congratulate them heartily. I believe that scheme will speedily prove one of the brightest gems in Western Australia's advancement. The Minister said it was not yet known with certainty how many farmers would come under the development scheme. Several hundreds of blocks of land have been alienated from the Crown in the new portion of my electorate during the last 12 or 18 months. I refer to the areas about Lake King, Lake Camm, and Lake Calverley. Many of those settlers are distant as much as 14 and 16 miles from railway communication. The majority of them have gone out to those districts with their families to carve out homes. Unless railway facilities are granted to them within a reasonable time, they will have occasion to declare, "We were sent out here under false pretences." A great injustice will be done to those settlers, and a great setback will be administered to the hitherto wonderful development of Western Australia, if railway communication is

not supplied. Whatever Government may be in power after the general election will, I hope and trust, bear in mind the situation of the men in question, some of whom have come thousands of miles, from the Old Country, in response to this State's advertisements of facilities for settling on the land here. Any member who has inclination and time to pay a visit to that district will return from it perfectly convinced that previously he had no adequate idea of the area of land suitable for settlement in the wheat belt. I wish to stress that no public man and no business man ever prospered without making mistakes in the process of prospering. Therefore anything I have said to-night is not actuated by a desire to criticise unduly the men who have guided Western Australia's destinies during the last decade. A Western Australian Cabinet comprises only six or seven members, and the rank and file of members sitting behind the Government have to bear the brunt of mistakes made by Ministers. Do Governments take their supporters adequately into their confidence? It seems to me that big schemes have been launched on right lines, but ultimately have not carried into effect what the Government had in their minds. Millions have been squandered in Western Australia during the last 10 or 15 years, to my knowledge. In fact, that is evident from published reports, and from statements made by Ministers of the Crown and by members of Parliament. I have to stand my share of the blame for many of the mistakes that have been made. Now I wish to utter a kindly word which I hope will be accepted in the proper spirit. It is the hope that every member of the Chamber, including the members of the present Ministry, will profit by the mistakes to which I have alluded. Whichever Government may be in power next session, I at all events am going to be here.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. STUBBS: I am going to make it very warm for the party in power if they say a scheme will cost a million and it actually costs three millions. During my term as member for Wagin I have known some very fine men indeed on both sides of the Chamber, men whom it has been a pleasure and an honour to know. Ninety-nine out of every hundred members are honourable, upright and true. It stands to their credit that no country in the world has Parlia-

mentarians of greater integrity. Never has a charge of corrupt practices been sustained against any Western Australian Minister of the Crown or member of Parliament. I hope every member of the Chamber, whether in agreement with my criticisms or not, will acknowledge that I have uttered nothing which I did not believe to be true, and which I did not believe it to be my duty to say. I know that in this Parliament there are men imbued with the same desire as animates me to advance the State and see it prosper. So long as men with that ideal sit in this Chamber, the future of the State will be assured.

Question put and passed; the Address-in-reply adopted.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

BILL—TRANSFER OF LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [7.30] in moving the second reading said: Very little explanation is needed in respect of this Bill, because it is fully dealt with in the memorandum which appears on the print of the Bill. The Bill has been found necessary in order that land sold under a writ or warrant of execution should receive a proper title. On a sale by the sheriff or the bailiff of a local court of land belonging to a judgment debtor pursuant to a writ or warrant of execution, the Registrar of Titles will be required to enter in the register a transfer of the land by the sheriff or bailiff to the purchaser, and such transfer shall have the same effect as if made by the judgment debtor as the registered proprietor of the land. As members know, application for a transfer in the ordinary way must be accompanied by the certificate of title. When land is sold for a debt it is obvious that the man who has the title is not able to produce it, and so when the bailiff comes to give the title of the land the certificate is not there. The Bill empowers the Registrar to issue a title just as if the land had been sold by a road board or municipality without a title, the owner of the land having gone off somewhere, with the result that the

original title cannot be produced. Under the Municipalities Act the Registrar may give a title to land sold in that way. The Bill does the same thing in respect of land sold under a judgment summons if the original title cannot be produced.

Mr. Sampson: But at present there must be some means whereby that difficulty is overcome.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The land is transferred in the registrar's book and the purchaser is really the owner of the land, but when he comes to dispose of it he has not the title, but only an entry in the registrar's book. Of course if the land is sold by order of a local authority the registrar can issue a title, but not in respect of land sold under a judgment summons. All that the Bill does is to bring the procedure in the latter case into line with the procedure under the Municipalities Act. I move:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Sampson, debate adjourned.

BILLS (15)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Mental deficiency.
- 2, Mines Regulation Act Amendment.
- 3, Road Closure.
- 4, Agricultural Lands Purchase Act Amendment.
- 5, Reserves.
- 6, Stamp Act Amendment.
- 7, Workers' Homes.
- 8, Main Roads Act Amendment.
- 9, Industries Assistance Act Continuance.
- 10, Land Agents.
- 11, Inspection of Scaffolding Act Amendment.
- 12, Regulation of Buildings.
- 13, Divorce Act Amendment.
- 14, Water Boards Act Amendment.
- 15, Road Districts Act Amendment.
- 16, Criminal Code Amendment (introduced by Mr. Mann.)
- 17, Vermin Act Amendment (introduced by Mr. Sampson.)
- 18, High School Act Amendment (introduced by Mr. Davy.)

MOTION—COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS
(Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [7.49]:
I move—

That the appointment by His Excellency the Governor of Ernest Alfred Evans as Commissioner of Railways at a salary of £2,000 a year in the terms of Executive Council minute laid on the Table of the Legislative Assembly on the 6th day of August, 1929, be approved.

I have pleasure in moving this motion. I think most members will be in accord with it. We had some little discussion in the House some time back regarding the possible successor of Colonel Pope, and a number of members indicated that if it were possible to get a man within the service able to fill the position with credit to himself and satisfaction to the people, they would be glad to see him appointed. It has been found possible to secure such a man in the person of Mr. Evans who has had 32 years' experience of our railway service. He has occupied high administrative positions and, during the time he has been in charge of the big departments of Locomotive Running and Chief Mechanical Engineer, he has given every satisfaction and has done much good work for the people of the State. He has shown organising ability and capacity to administer a large department. He has shown tact in dealing with the employees, as well as firmness, and he is acknowledged to be fair, just and equitable.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: He needs to be firm with the Minister.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: He is firm with the Minister, too. He is a man with opinions of his own and if he thinks he is right—and he generally is—he has no hesitation in stressing his opinions whether he considers they are in agreement with the Minister's desires or not. He has the necessary firmness of character to stand up for his opinions in all circumstances. Not that the present Commissioner and I have had much cause to disagree on anything he has forwarded for recommendation. I have found myself in accord with him on many things in which I am personally greatly interested. Mr. Evans also has opinions regarding the capital expenditure which, after all, constitutes one of the principal things with which the Minister has to deal in railway administration. One of the chief things a Minister has to do is to allocate in

the best possible manner the loan money made available by the Treasurer and that is where a conflict of opinion may occur between the Minister and the Commissioner. Without unduly stressing the qualifications of Mr. Evans—most members have come into contact with him—I should like to say that from my constant association with him I know his capabilities and capacity. Owing to the unfortunate illness of the ex-Commissioner, Colonel Pope, Mr. Evans during the last three or four years has acted as Commissioner for a considerable period, and while it is not very satisfactory for a man to hold an important position in an acting capacity, yet Mr. Evans has done well and has given every satisfaction to the Government and I think also to the people. Now that he has been appointed to the position for five years, he will have more scope for his organising ability. He has already inaugurated reforms which will have a beneficial effect on the revenue of the railway system. Mr. Evans would no doubt desire, as Colonel Pope did, to be able to spend a considerable amount of capital to increase the efficiency of the railways and effect considerable economies in their administration. The Railway Department, like many other public utilities, has to share in the loan money available, and during the last four or five years a considerable portion of the loan money spent within the Railway Department—I am not now referring to new lines—has been spent on additions to rolling stock and on providing necessary facilities for people in the outback districts so that they may the more economically handle their products.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You do not want to provoke a discussion on all the railways.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No, but I do not like to treat the motion as merely formal. The Act provides that the appointment of the Commissioner must receive the approval of Parliament. I do not think there will be any objection to the appointment of Mr. Evans because we all know him so well, but in introducing the motion, I feel that I should give the House an opportunity to discuss the matter, if it so desires. The Government have given very serious consideration to the appointment and after considering all the applications received from all over Australia—

Hon. G. Taylor: A good many, too, I believe.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, I believe there were about 70 applications from different parts of Australia. There were about 20 applicants, any one of whom would have been able to fill the position to an extent, but of all the applicants I think undoubtedly the man who could best fill the position is the one selected by the Government.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [7.57]: I do not propose to ask for an adjournment of the motion. I do not think we should discuss all the ramifications of the railways on a motion for the appointment to the Commissionership of a man who has been so long in the service. From this side of the House and from the other side, I believe, members expressed the hope that someone within the State or within the service would be appointed to the position. I think I have said before, but I shall say it again, that the making of appointments, particularly senior appointments, is the most sacred duty the Government undertake. So much depends upon a wise selection of men to fill important positions. Their duty lasts very often long after the Governments leave office. Officials may hold their positions for a long time and have an opportunity to do much good or much harm. I am very glad that someone from within the service and certainly from within the State has been selected for this position. We have been very fortunate in the men who have been appointed to control our railways, and with probably one exception, they have always been selected from people in the State. To-day, unfortunately, our old friend, the ex-Minister for Works (Hon. W. J. George) is very ill. He was Commissioner of Railways for five years. Mr. Short, who was connected with the service for many years and was also Commissioner, is in fairly good health, but Colonel Pope, the ex-Commissioner is broken in health, due I suppose, to the strenuous work that he as Commissioner had to undertake. Each of those gentlemen did excellent service in turn as Commissioner of Railways. On the whole we have been very fortunate in being able to select from the service a man we know, and one who will not disturb the service. It is easy to do incalculable harm by placing the wrong man in charge of a service that covers 8,000 men

or more, and clothing him with statutory authority. We need not discuss the question of railways generally on this motion. The point is, have we appointed a suitable man, is he the best we can get, and are we satisfied that the motion should be carried? The Minister for Railways said something about the expenditure of loan money.

The Minister for Railways: I said that must come before the Minister for approval.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I was Minister for Railways for 11 months, and I know something about that aspect of the business. I agree that all expenditure of loan moneys must be carefully watched. Our system may not be quite in the condition we would like it to be, but we must avoid more expenditure than is necessary in effecting improvements to it. We must spend our money wisely, because it is difficult to get. It should be used only on reproductive works. I do not mean that the safety of the railways should be imperilled in any way, but we should not spend this year, at any rate, more on improving existing railways than is necessary to safeguard the welfare of users of the railway.

The Minister for Railways: That is quite right.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I know it will be difficult to get money from the Treasurer. If he listened to all the experts, he could easily spend a great deal of money in improving the grades so that bigger loads could be carried. In its present position however, the State should not spend lavishly in effecting improvements to the railway system. We shall have another opportunity later of discussing railway matters more fully, especially of knocking over the argument put up by the Minister the other night. We shall have to discuss railway results for the year. Mr. Evans is only now entering upon his duties as commissioner. We shall expect satisfactory service of him, and I am sure we shall get it. It was a good thing to improve the status of some of the other senior officers of the service. We are endeavouring to run this great business with very few well-paid men. Next to the Commissioner, I think the salary has been no higher than £1,200 a year. We have £24,000,000 invested in this concern, which is doing a wonderful service to the country.

We cannot afford to be too parsimonious at the top. I am glad to see that one or two advancements have been made in connection with the real management of the system.

The Minister for Railways: The Commissioner should not do detail work.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The man who looks on sees most of the game. This means that the man at the head of affairs should see that other people do the work, and that he himself has time to oversee the main features. That should be the job of the Commissioner. The revenue of the railways now approaches £4,000,000 and the expenditure £3,000,000. It is easy to lose a considerable sum if through want of management even one penny in the pound is missing. It is worth while to pay well a few men at the head of the service, indeed to pay well all who are employed in it. I think the service is a satisfied one. It is certainly working well. I see the officers in most parts of the State. Everywhere I find they are doing all they can to carry out their duties satisfactorily from the departmental as well as the public point of view.

Mr. Kenneally: That is an argument in favour of superannuation.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I should like to pension off the hon. member. The interest that railway officials display in their work is due to the methods adopted by previous commissioners, particularly by Colonel Pope. I hope those methods will be continued, and that the officers will be encouraged to go on showing interest in their work. Our system extends from Perth to Meekatharra, and to the South Australian border, and we have branch railways at Port Hedland and at Hopetoun. It is necessary that all concerned in the work should interest themselves in its satisfactory management. We are very fortunate in our Public Service, our railway service and in our police force. All these officers seem to be keenly interested in the welfare of the country. Perhaps that is more necessary in a small country than it is in one that is more densely populated. I am glad that Mr. Evans has been appointed to this important position. It will serve as an encouragement to others in the service. They will know that when it is possible to appoint a man from within the service to some higher post he will be chosen for it. By following this

system we avoid any drastic changes and the new broom business. An appointee from outside the State might upset the whole service for the time being, and cause the expenditure of a considerable sum of money. It is customary to look upon a man who has been brought from afar to fill an important position as a wonderful person.

The Minister for Railways: It would take him a couple of years to learn the job.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is so, and in the process the other officers of the service would be discouraged.

The Minister for Railways: Yes.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is not right. Every promotion from within the service means a benefit to others. I approve of the changes which have been made. I am sure the whole House will support the motion. I hope the Commissioner will have a successful time and will enjoy better health than one or two of his predecessors have done, owing to the strain to which they have been subjected. It is a heavy tax upon a man to run a system comprising 4,000 miles of railway in a country such as this.

HON. G. TAYLOR (Mount Margaret) [8.10]: It gives me great pleasure to support the motion. I have come into close contact with Mr. Evans, especially when he was Chief Mechanical Engineer in charge of the Midland Junction workshops. I have also had to discuss matters with him as Acting Commissioner. I have always found him a very capable and reasonable man. His mind has always been trimmed upon that which was best for the system under his control. I think his State service extends over 30 years. I am pleased that the Government have made this choice. They have had very little difficulty in doing so. Not only had they Mr. Evans' written papers before them, but they had his service and concrete evidence before them that he was capable of doing the work, in other words, that he could deliver the goods. I am sure he will be a credit to himself, as well as to the State, in his position as Commissioner of Railways.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [8.12]: I, too, support the motion. When the Railway Estimates were before the House last year, I voiced sentiments that have been re-

echoed to-night in respect to the appointment of a man trained within the service.

Mr. Panton: No doubt that is what influenced the Government.

Mr. SAMPSON: The Minister for Railways has taken a wise step in making this appointment. I believe everyone who travels in the State will applaud his action. Mr. Evans is well known. He is a man of sound judgment, is held in high respect, and is both enthusiastic and industrious. This position makes a heavy call upon the strength of anyone who holds it. I believe that in Mr. Evans we have a man who is temperamentally qualified to stand up to the heavy demands the work must place upon him. Trained locally, he understands local needs. His appointment approves the principle that when a suitable local man is available he should be selected for the post. I range myself with those who have applauded the action of the Minister.

MR. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [8.13]: It would be interesting to know Mr. Evans' age. It appears to me we are not consistent in Government departments. We are continually retiring Government servants when they reach a certain age. I am not opposing Mr. Evans' appointment. So far as I know he is a capable officer. When, however, we are retiring people because they reach a certain age—I feel sure Mr. Evans himself must be close to that age now—it seems we are anything but consistent. I do not know whether it is a fact but railway men say that Mr. Evans, when Chief Mechanical Engineer, and when calling for applicants for promotion in the workshops, stipulated that the men must not be over 45 years of age.

The Minister for Railways: It is the Education Department about which you are talking.

Mr. SLEEMAN: This was given to me on good authority. It seems to me peculiar that Mr. Evans should make this proviso when arranging for the promotion of members of his own staff, and should now at his age be occupying the post of chief officer of the State railway service. I should like to know his age.

MR. KENNEALLY (East Perth) [8.15]: The question under discussion involves the appointment of a man who controls a large revenue. It can be taken for granted that

the progress of the State itself can be gauged to a large extent by the dimensions of the railway revenue. I hope that the motion before us will be the last of its kind Parliament will be asked to consider. The time has come in the development of Western Australia when it should not be left to any one man to control the whole of our railway system. Just as it has been found necessary in other countries and in other States of Australia to divide the control of their railways in order to secure efficient control, so the time has arrived when the Western Australian railways should be in charge of more than one officer.

Mr. Sampson: South Australia was not very successful in the appointment of a multiplicity of leaders.

Mr. KENNEALLY: The hon. member is not very conversant with the position in South Australia, where they have what is known as rehabilitation scheme, which was based on an expenditure of £4,000,000, but on which £11,000,000 has already been spent. This is a phase of the question with which the hon. member is unfamiliar. In South Australia there is a single Commissionership, not a triple Commissionership! The State there is suffering from what they call "Webitis"; the Commissioner was an importation from outside the borders of the State.

Mr. Sampson: They should have stuck to their local man.

The Minister for Mines: They should have stuck to their three Commissioners.

Mr. Sampson: That system was not satisfactory.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I think an alteration should take place in connection with our railway system, and I hope the House will be called upon very soon to consider the appointment of more than one Commissioner. When that is done, the question of giving the employees who, the Leader of the Opposition says, are performing their work so well, direct representation under the system of control by Commissioners. By that means there could be increased co-operation between the staff and those in control of it. That system has been tried successfully elsewhere. It was tried in Great Britain during the war period with satisfactory results. I think we should make use of the experiences gained by such experiments and adapt our system accordingly. I support the motion. I believe we have a good official in the

position and while we continue our present system, under which a single Commissioner is in charge of our railways, I confidently anticipate that we shall receive good service from the man who has been appointed. Despite that, I hope it is the last time we shall be asked to consider such a motion.

MR. WITHERS (Banbury) [8.18]: I do not wish to oppose the motion. I agree with what the member for East Perth (Mr. Kennelly) has said regarding the appointment of three Commissioners, but the point that appeals to me as important is that which was referred to by the member for Fremantle (Mr. Sleeman) regarding the retiring age. I confess that if I had to choose a man of ability to carry on under the existing system, I would have chosen Mr. Evans for the position. At the same time we must take cognisance of the fact that he is near the retiring age. After serving the State for five years in his new position he will naturally retire. In the circumstances I think the appointment of a younger man would have been of more advantage to the State. With such an officer appointed, his first five years would be in the nature of a probationary period. His job would be before him and if he did not improve conditions during his first five years, his position would be in jeopardy. In such circumstances the incentive to make good would ever be before him. In the present instance the incentive is not apparent. I think that phase should be considered in connection with future appointments.

MR. LAMBERT (Coolgardie) [8.20]: For some time I have considered we should have an increased number of Commissioners in charge of our railways. There was a move in that direction in this House some years ago. I do not know why it was dropped. We have over £22,000,000 of the State's money invested in our railways and it appears to me that a concern in which so much is involved is too big for one Commissioner to look after, even although he be a superman. I dare say there are many improvements that could be effected in connection with the economical running of our railways, but it is impossible for one man sitting in his office in Perth to give attention to that phase of railway administration or to know where economies and im-

provements can be effected. I had hoped that the Government would have introduced amending legislation a long time ago, so as to provide for the appointment of three Commissioners. I am aware that Mr. Evans has grown up in the service and has gained a thorough knowledge of the ramifications and working of the railways. That is of great advantage to him and to the officers associated with him. At the same time there is so much involved that I think we should have at least three Commissioners.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: And then they could have their caucus!

Mr. Davy: Who would be the boss?

Mr. LAMBERT: Under such a system we would have men with mixed capacity and qualification.

Hon. G. Taylor: And we would get mixed results, too.

Mr. LAMBERT: That is quite wrong. Hon. members must be fully seized with the importance of the railway system in connection with the progress of the State. The future of Western Australia can be spelt in two words—transport and power. Those phases are undoubtedly linked up with the department controlled by the Commissioner of Railways and should receive the serious consideration of Parliament. One grave defect in the present Railways Act is to be found in the fact that the Commissioner not only controls the railways but our electricity supply and our tramway service. I think that is wrong in principle. The tramways of the metropolitan area should be run in friendly rivalry with our railways. Naturally, heads of the different departments look for results, and the results that we should look to from these two activities should be those that are for the general benefit of the public using the utilities. The time is past when we should allow the Commissioner of Railways, who is not an electrical authority, to control the power station at East Perth.

Mr. Davy: I presume that in practice he does not have anything to do with the power house.

Mr. LAMBERT: In practice he does.

Mr. Davy: I do not think he does, and I would like to know what the Minister says about it.

Mr. LAMBERT: Everything in connection with the extension of the power station and other matters relating to our electricity

supply have to be referred to the Commissioner of Railways and sanctioned by him.

Mr. North: The former Commissioner of Railways prevented the installation of electric stoves in Cottesloe.

Mr. LAMBERT: Perhaps so. Perhaps he thought that Cottesloe at times was quite hot enough, without the installation of electric stoves! I do not think it should be within the scope of the duties of any one man to have charge of our railways, tramways and electricity supply. In my opinion our electricity supply will play one of the most important parts in our development in the days to come. In Victoria they have special Commissioners to control that branch of the State's activities, and electric power in that State is playing an ever-increasingly important part. That is due solely to the fact that the Electricity Commissions made up their minds to become independent of outside sources of fuel supplies and have developed a power scheme along their own lines to meet the requirements of their State. Then as regards the tramways, I was associated with others in an inquiry regarding tramway extensions. The question uppermost in the mind of one of those engaged upon the investigations was a desire to see that the railways did not suffer from the revenue standpoint through any extensions of the tramway system. He thought it was awful to think that we should run tramways to suit the requirements of the people of the metropolitan area when they came into conflict with the railway system there. I hope to see the time when the tramways in the metropolitan area, like the water supply, will be handed over to a board of control. Perhaps the Minister for Works would not like to see one of his most important departments lopped off and given to an independent board. Sometime ago we had a discussion in the House regarding the duties of members of Parliament, and country members found that they were called upon to spend a considerable portion of their time in discussing matters that affected the metropolitan area alone and were in a sense purely parochial. That did not directly concern us as members representing country districts, but I do hope the Government will tackle this question, that it will not be allowed to drift on, year in year out. I remember a previous Government introduced

a Bill for the appointment of three commissioners.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Oh no.

Mr. LAMBERT: If I remember rightly it was the Wilson Government.

The Minister for Railways: The Lefroy Government.

Mr. LAMBERT: It is a pity that gentleman did not live long enough politically to pass legislation that would have given effect to the appointment of three commissioners. I think there was a nigger in the woodpile. Possibly there was a reason for the opposition to it, and possibly that opposition was known to my friend opposite.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I did not know anything of it.

Mr. LAMBERT: You are one of the innocents abroad; I do not know anyone who can look so innocent and smile so pleasantly.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must address the Chair.

Mr. LAMBERT: I was led astray by the hon. members' interjection. I hope the Government will consider the needs of the metropolitan area and provide up-to-date charabancs that will be an adjunct to the tramway system. With the rapid growth of our requirements we shall probably have at no very distant date, a big power scheme that will embrace a greater part of the South-West. That will mean, amongst other things, the electrification of the railways. I have much pleasure in supporting the motion.

MR. KENNEDY (Greenough) [8.33]: I have no desire to oppose the motion. Personally I think Mr. Evans will make a thoroughly efficient commissioner, and I disagree with those members who favour the appointment of three commissioners. The time is not opportune for incurring that additional expenditure. We have now a Commissioner of Railways at £2,000 a year, a Chief Traffic Manager, a Chief Mechanical Engineer, an Engineer for Existing Lines, an Electrical Engineer and many other administrative officers located in the city. In the country we have district superintendents, district engineers, district loco inspectors, district local superintendents, and also electrical engineers, and if the railways are not properly administered with such an army of officers, it is time we got somebody else

to do the job. I should like the Government to be consistent. I understand that the newly appointed commissioner is 64 or 65 years of age.

The Minister for Railways: He is 63.

Mr. KENNEDY: He has been an officer of the Railway Department for many years, and has given valuable service to the State. At the same time, there are in other departments of the railways, officers who have given equally valuable services in their particular spheres, and yet because they have reached the age of 64 their services have been dispensed with. A week ago a ganger from Kurrawang was retired because he had reached the age of 64. I have known this man to have been a very efficient ganger, having received great praise for keeping the permanent way in perfect condition. If there is one section of the railway system that requires the services of efficient men, it is the permanent way. Time tables cannot be adhered to if the permanent way is not in a perfect state of repair. It is just as important to have efficient gangers as it is to have efficient engine drivers. Now we find men in one department are retired because they have reached the age of 64, and yet we proceed to appoint a man who is approaching 64 to the position of Commissioner. That gentleman has given no better service to the State in his particular departments than has the ganger in the departments under his control. I approached the Minister for Railways and asked whether it was the policy of the Government to dispense with the services of men between the ages of 60 and 65, and he promised me he would make inquiries. To be consistent, the Government, if they ask Parliament to ratify the appointment of Mr. Evans for five years, should also extend the retiring age of others employed in the service.

(Question put and passed.)

PAPERS—PASTORAL LEASE 3496/96.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison) [8.43]:
I move—

That the file appertaining to Pastoral Lease No. 3496/96, and held in the name of G. S., I. S., and H. C. Herbert, situated East of Meekatharra, be laid upon the Table of the House.

I regret that the Minister has not accepted my motion as formal, and that he desires to offer opposition to placing the papers on the Table of the House. That puts me in the unfortunate position of having to advance second-hand information which might not be actually true, in support of my desire to have the file produced. There must be some reason for the Minister's objection to tabling the file, and that seems to confirm the information I have gleaned regarding the administration of the Lands Department in regard to this particular file. When speaking on the Address-in-reply last year I referred to a large area of pastoral country that was held between Meekatharra and Wiluna for speculative purposes. I repeatedly referred to this particular block though I did not use the names of the lessees. I indicated exactly where it was, and the approximate area embodied in it. Although it may be urged that this is a personal matter between a client of the State, and the officers and Minister controlling the department, I feel that if it can be shown there has been a miscarriage of justice in the administration of affairs of State, members of Parliament should take notice of it. I know this block well. I was invited by correspondence to go to the Lands Department, and informed that if this block was available for selection I could take it up for a party of three. On visiting the department I discovered that the land had been selected three weeks or three months prior to my visit. That took place in 1923 or 1924. From 1923 to 1924 this block was never touched by the lessee. He had held it for five or six years. I do not think he had even seen it. I am also informed that the amount of rent owing on it was £177. I cannot vouch for the accuracy of that statement. That is why I want to see the file. Every regulation that a pastoralist is supposed to comply with was broken by the lessee. He owed this large sum of money in rent, he did not improve the land to the extent of one penny, and had no stock upon it. When I last referred to the matter the Minister was kind enough to ask me why I had not informed him of the facts. This particular block was particularly centred in my mind. It is in a good position geographically. It was desired by quite a number of young pastoralists who wanted to get

married and live near their parents. The Minister invited me to give him particulars of those people who were breaking the law. I took it from the Minister's remarks that if the statements were correct he would take some action. I know now, however, that there was an application in for the forfeiture of this block. At the time the Minister asked me why I had not informed him of the violation of the land laws, this application for forfeiture had been lodged. I say without fear of contradiction that, in addition to the rental of £177 being due, the land was never stocked or improved. I saw it myself frequently. The application for forfeiture was not successful. I know the application was lodged because the man who put it in spoke to me at Meekatharra and complained to me bitterly about the administration. Take a man like W. A. Snell, one of the earliest pastoralists in the State.

Hon. G. Taylor: A very old pioneer.

Mr. MARSHALL: He has lived on the fore-quarter of a rabbit and a pint of flour for the best part of a week, which is more than most alleged pioneers have done. This gentleman remains in the bush year in and year out. He is a most difficult man to communicate with because he does his job. It happened that he failed to pay his rent for one year, although he had stocked and improved his run. He owed the current year's rent, by which I mean that the full 12 months had not elapsed. Rents, however, are payable in advance, and he was late on that occasion. Every lease he held was cancelled. Through the agency and overtures of a certain member of Parliament the matter was re-considered and Snell got back his land. He had to pay his rent, and it took many telegrams and much hurry and scurry to get in the money to save the situation. Against that we have this block of 362,000 acres that a man held for five years, and who broke every pastoral law imaginable. An application was made for the forfeiture of the block but it was unsuccessful. I should like to know the reason for this. I want to see the file to ascertain why it is that certain holders of pastoral areas are allowed to do this sort of thing. I know about the time this land was taken up. I want to see if the allegations which have been made against the administration of the department are based on fact. The Minister should not have put me to the disagreeable task of saying what I have said.

We should not be refused a file under conditions such as these. I have been obliged to make charges which I find it objectionable to do. I am not happy about having to advance arguments of this sort to show that the laws of the State are being administered without regard for fair play and justice. If one individual is not allowed to owe his rent for 12 months another person should not be allowed to do the same thing. If one individual is compelled to improve his land strictly in accordance with the law, other individuals should be obliged to do so. If one pastoralist is obliged to stock his land according to law another should be compelled to do so. That has not been done as I have shown. I want to see the file to ascertain whether I have been informed of the facts. If the statements are true I am sorry to say the administration of the Lands Department has been a dismal failure in this case. I am sorry to have to make any charges at all. I would rather have looked quietly at the file, satisfied myself as to the facts, and given information to the parties concerned who are mostly interested in it. The neighbours around this block are annoyed and disappointed. They have been watching it closely, but their efforts to secure it have failed. They informed me there was a large sum owing for rent. I do not know whether that is so, but I do know that the rest of the arguments I have advanced are correct, that the land was not stocked and improved according to the regulations. An application for forfeiture was lodged by a man named Baker, but it was not approved. If the Minister had laid the file on the Table probably nothing more would have been heard of it.

On motion by the Minister for Lands, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.55 p.m.