

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: Is he a practical fireman?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Certainly. There is no necessity for this provision. The principle is bad. If we are going to put employees upon boards that are controlling the industry with which they are connected, what is going to be the finish of it all? This is one of the most dangerous precedents that could be brought before Parliament. Although many portions of the Bill could be agreed to, I hope this part will be amended in Committee.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: It is all padding to cover up this particular clause.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I will support the second reading, with the idea of helping to delete Clause 3 when in Committee.

On motion by Hon. E. H. Harris, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—LOTTERIES (CONTROL) ACT AMENDMENT.**

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

*House adjourned at 5.48 p.m.*

## **QUESTION—RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION.**

Mr. HAWKE asked the Minister for Railways: 1, What factors are taken into consideration in deciding the order in which proposed railway lines authorised by Parliament are to be built? 2, What is the order in which such lines stand at the present time?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, Consideration is given to the relative urgency and importance of the authorised lines, from all aspects, and a decision made accordingly. 2, No decision has been made, but when occasion demands, the matter will be dealt with and a decision reached in accordance with reply to question No. 1.

## **LEAVE OF ABSENCE.**

On motion by Mr. Wilson, leave of absence for two weeks granted to Mr. Nulsen (Kanowna) on the ground of urgent public business.

## **BILL—LAND TAX AND INCOME TAX.**

Introduced by the Minister for Railways (for the Premier) and read a first time.

## **BILL—LOTTERIES (CONTROL) ACT AMENDMENT.**

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

## **Legislative Assembly,**

*Thursday, 2nd November, 1933.*

## **ASSENT TO BILL.**

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the Wiluna Water Board Loan Guarantee Bill.

## **BILL—PURCHASERS' PROTECTION.**

*Second Reading.*

## **THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT**

(Hon. J. J. Kennecally—East Perth) [4.35] in moving the second reading said: Members will recollect that the House previously gave attention to the question of the protection of purchasers in connection with land transactions. As a result of information supplied, the then Government appointed a

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

Royal Commission to inquire into the operations of a firm known as Land and Homes (W.A.) Ltd., and other transactions considered necessary. The Commission was appointed on the 17th August, 1931, and the report was presented in November of the same year. I will briefly remind members of the purport of the Commissioner's findings. During the course of the Commission's investigations some interesting figures regarding land transactions were made available which showed in effect that the company referred to had purchased land at a cost of £192,398 and the total sales represented £223,671, showing a gross profit of £121,283. The selling expenses amounted to £55,369 showing a net profit of £65,909. Of course that net profit is on the assumption that all the money that the purchasers had contracted to pay for the land was received by the company. The net profit, therefore, would be subject to the deduction of any amounts not paid to the company. It is but fair to say, as I have quoted from the report, that the finding of the Royal Commissioner set out that the charges of fraud made against the company were not sustained by the evidence placed before him. The Commissioner in his report said that the information placed before him indicated that considerable alteration could be made with advantage to the existing law regarding the sale of subdivisinal land. The report included the following:—

It should be unlawful for any vendor, salesman, canvasser or other person negotiating for the sale of subdivisinal land to promise or undertake to re-huy any such property at a profit, or to re-sell it on behalf of a buyer at a profit.

Any statement, whether oral or written, as to the position or operation, whether actual, proposed, or projected, of any public utility, and any marking or indication thereof on any plan of subdivision, should be deemed to be a representation that the construction and operation thereof in such place has been authorised, in manner required by law, by the person or body having authority so to do.

"Public utility" to include the construction or provision of roads, water supply, light or power, drainage, schools, parks, reserves, and also railways, tramways and other means of transport.

Any representation relating to any subdivision or any land comprised therein should be deemed to be made for the purpose of inducing purchase by a buyer, and to be material in inducing the buyer to enter into a contract for purchase of any land in such subdivision,

and if untrue, should be deemed to have been made with knowledge of its untruth unless the contrary is proved.

The main recommendations of the Royal Commissioner referred to that aspect of land sales. In the course of his report, the Commissioner dealt with other aspects of the question as they occurred to him arising out of the hearing. I do not desire to quote all of them, but the Bill makes provision by which the recommendations of the Commissioner may be given effect. As a matter of fact, there may be other matters that will occur to members as being essential for inclusion in the Bill, but, as the Royal Commissioner was appointed and, on the evidence placed before him by different sections of the community, he submitted recommendations regarding what should be done in the interests of the people, I have followed closely his recommendations in the drafting of the Bill. One feature is that the Bill will apply to contracts made after the commencement of this legislation. Members will recollect that when the matter was considered, the object was to secure relief for a number of people who were suffering as a result of the operations of Land and Homes, Ltd. They were being prosecuted and their furniture and homes were, in some instances, threatened with distraint, if the owners did not pay the amounts due by them to the company. When the question was debated in this House, an endeavour was made to ascertain whether it would be possible to relieve the position of those individuals. During the course of the inquiry and prior to the findings of the Commissioner, the company undertook not to take action in certain instances. I have not endeavoured to make the Bill retroactive, and it will apply only to contracts made subsequent to the commencement of the Act. Regarding representations made in order to secure the sale of land, the Bill provides that if statements are made that the construction of any public utility is projected in the particular locality in which the land is situated and the statements are erroneous, that fact will be sufficient to nullify the sale. The statements made shall be deemed to be made for the purpose of effecting a sale, unless proved to the contrary.

Mr. Sampson: If it were said that a water supply was available and it was not true, the deal would be off.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: Yes. The definition of "public utility" included in the Bill covers roads, bridges, water supply, light, power, drainage, schools, parks, reserves, railways, tramways and other means of transport.

Mr. Stubbs: That is fairly comprehensive.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: I do not know of anything that has been left out. In the opinion of the Royal Commissioner, if statements made were incorrect, there was misrepresentation with a view to inducing a person to purchase land. In such circumstances, the transaction will be nullified. Provision is also made that within 14 days after the execution of the contract if the land has not been inspected prior to the execution of the contract, the person concerned shall have the right to repudiate the contract. That means to say that, at any time within 14 days, it will be possible for the purchaser, should he inspect the land and not be satisfied, to repudiate the contract. If the contract is to be repudiated, it shall be done in writing, and in case a contract is repudiated under those conditions, any deposit paid shall be returnable to the purchaser.

Mr. Sampson: It sound like the millenium.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: The judges of this State are not in the habit of recommending ideas associated with the millenium. Their recommendations are based on evidence submitted to them. That is why I have endeavoured to keep as near as possible to the Commissioner's recommendations, and I have kept almost entirely to them, because he heard the evidence tendered, and with his legal mind, was able to frame recommendations. Provision is also made that 21 days shall be allowed any purchaser after the execution of a contract to examine the title of the vendor to and in any such land.

Mr. Stubbs: Very important, too.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: If there is any flaw in the title, provision is made whereby 21 days notice shall then be given to the vendor to rectify the error. If it is not rectified within seven days after the expiration of that period, the purchaser shall have the right to cancel the contract, and any money paid as a deposit shall be returnable to the purchaser. Evidence was tendered to the Commissioner regarding the

detrimental effect that the sales of subdivisonal land to infants and to married women had had on the community, and it is proposed to accept the Commissioner's recommendation and afford protection in that direction. Contracts by infants and married women, unless ratified, by husband, father, or lawful guardian may be repudiated—

Mr. Sampson: That is rather a reflection on the women.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: Not necessarily; the judges are not in the habit of reflecting on the women of the State. I think the member for Swan is making a mistake.

Mr. Sampson: I do not like the reflection.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: Protection can be afforded to people without reflecting upon them, and that is what is intended here. Contracts by infants and married women, unless ratified by the husband, father or lawful guardian, may be repudiated at any time before the completion of the contract or, whether such contract is completed or not, within 12 months after the date of execution of the contract.

Mr. Sampson: Some contracts made by men should be ratified by the women.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: Where contracts are cancelled under those conditions, all moneys paid shall be refunded. I ask members to recollect that in some instances, the law already provides that money paid by a minor shall be returned. In some of the cases taken on that ground, the company had to refund the money. The provision in the Bill is desired to make it definite that the money shall be claimable by law unless within the prescribed period the contract is ratified by the people legally entitled to ratify it. If a married woman purchases land and the contract is not ratified by the husband, she shall have the right to cancel, but if she does not cancel, the debt will become a debt of the woman and not of her husband. We do not want a husband made responsible for a debt incurred through his wife having been cajoled or induced to invest in land that the husband does not require or desire.

Mr. Doney: A vendor may not be prepared to sell to a woman unless her husband backed the contract.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: If the husband does not back the contract, the vendor will not be able to sell to the woman. Considerable difficulty arose over transactions between the vendor and women—

folk. Certain responsibilities were undertaken by womenfolk and the husbands were unable to carry them out. In the event of an action by the vendor for the recovery of purchase money, the court may, on the application of the purchaser, order the land to be returned to the vendor, and the court shall have power to grant damages not exceeding one-fourth of the purchase price of the land. In the cases that have been dealt with so far, the court has been restricted to deciding whether the contract was valid or not. If it was a valid contract, the court could not grant relief, even though it was impossible for the purchaser to carry out the contract.

Mr. Doney: Would that application be made by the purchaser or the vendor?

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: The purchaser, because he may still want to go on with the purchase of the land but may not have the money. If he said he could not continue, he could be mulct to the extent of one-fourth of the purchase price.

Mr. Stubbs: And released from paying the balance?

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: Yes. If the vendor does not prosecute in the court for the payment of the purchase money, but threatens to prosecute, the purchaser may apply to the court to be dealt with under the method I have just mentioned.

Mr. Sampson: If this Bill passes, there will be no need to think very much about buying until after one has bought.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: The hon. member may know what he means but I cannot follow it. One of the difficulties presented by the cases before the Commissioner—cases in which judgment had been obtained—was that in many instances it meant selling up the homes and furniture of the person who had entered into the contract to purchase. The Commissioner, very rightly—if I may comment on his report—said there should be provision whereby the court, if it thought fit in such circumstances might protect the home and furniture against the execution of the judgment. Provision is made in the Bill whereby, when judgment is obtained, the dwelling house owned or occupied by the judgment debtor as his home and the land appurtenant to it and the household furniture and domestic utensils shall be exempt from the execution

of the judgment unless otherwise specifically ordered by the magistrate. The Commissioner recommended that the court should have power on the application of the purchaser to exempt such articles from the execution of the judgment, but I have altered his recommendation somewhat, because I have provided that unless the court otherwise decides, they shall be exempt from the execution of judgment and costs.

Mr. Stubbs: This measure is an innovation? It is not on the statute-book of any other State?

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: I do not know, but such a provision is no innovation under our law generally. The Commissioner made no reference to exempting such articles from the costs. I assume—and I think members will agree that the assumption is reasonable—that he also meant that those articles should be exempt from the execution of the costs awarded in connection with the judgment.

Mr. Doney: It would seem to follow.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: In accordance with the Commissioner's recommendation, I have made provision against contracting outside the measure. Measures of the kind would be of little benefit to the people concerned if companies, before entering into contracts for the sale of land, could compel prospective purchasers to contract outside the provisions of the law. House-to-house canvassing by agents offering for sale land or shares or any chattels not available for inspection is prohibited. That is another recommendation of the Commissioner. Referring to house-to-house canvassing, the interpretation provided that "house" shall include a farm.

Mr. Stubbs: That will prevent agents from going around the country selling those things.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: It will not prevent the agents from going around, but it will prevent them from selling land, shares or chattels not then and there available for inspection.

Mr. Marshall: How would people at Wiluna get on? They would have no chance of getting a block of land down here, unless they came to Perth.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: If we prevented people at Wiluna from buying things on the representations of agents, many of them would live to bless us for making this provision.

Mr. Marshall: Many goldfields people have speculated wisely.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: For every one who has done so, there are many more who have not invested wisely.

Mr. Marshall: You are debarring goldfields people from the right to buy blocks of land.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: The hon. member's contention is incorrect. The Bill will not prevent people from purchasing land in Perth. The term "house" does not include "office," and the restriction regarding the sale of subdivisinal land does not include subdivisinal land sold at auction. If a person deliberately goes to a place where land is being sold, and desires to purchase a block, we do not want to prevent him from doing so. The reason for the measure, as indicated by the evidence placed before the Commission, was not to protect a person from buying land at auction, but to protect the person from buying land the purchase of which was solicited by an agent or the vendor himself.

Mr. Doney: It is competent for the vendor to set up an agency in Wiluna, or anywhere else.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: Yes, if he desires to do so. If land is purchased, and is not available for inspection, and if it has not been inspected prior to the purchase being effected, it can still be inspected within 14 days, and at any time during that period the purchaser can repudiate the bargain. Provision is made whereby each proprietor, vendor, promoter or selling agent is deemed responsible unless it is proved that the act is committed without his knowledge. In the case of a company, each member of it is responsible, because the Bill applies to managers, directors or secretaries. Many other things could have been included in this measure, and very properly so, but seeing that the question was brought before this Chamber, a Royal Commission was appointed, and evidence was submitted to it, the Bill was drafted to follow closely the recommendations of the Commissioner in the suggestions he made for relief in this respect. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Doney. debate adjourned.

## BILL — GERALDTON SAILORS AND SOLDIERS' MEMORIAL INSTITUTE LANDS VESTING.

*Second Reading.*

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [5.8] in moving the second reading said: Towards the end of the last war there was formed in Geraldton a body which was subsequently incorporated, known as the Geraldton Sailors and Soldiers' Memorial Institute. This organisation raised a large sum of money and purchased a big building in the heart of Geraldton as a soldiers' memorial institute. Amongst the assets of this incorporated body were 16 blocks of land. These were made available to the institute as a free gift by a resident of Geraldton. They form portion of a comparatively large area of suburban land, which had been subdivided into blocks by the original owner. Several blocks were disposed of, and the remainder were handed over to the institute to enable it to raise money to assist in paying off the debt on the building that had been purchased. In effect, the blocks represented an additional endowment to the organisation concerned. Since then an Act of Parliament was passed converting this incorporated body into a trust. Unfortunately, the land under review was not specifically dealt with by that legislation. The incorporated body was dissolved, and the land was left without an owner. It was like a man dying intestate. No one had any right to the blocks and they could therefore have reverted to the Crown. The Government were not anxious to avail themselves of their legal rights and to take possession of them, and the trust, which was created by Parliament, has now applied to have the blocks vested in it. It is necessary, therefore, to bring down this Bill in order that the rights of this organisation may be conserved, and the blocks made available to the trust to be used as may be thought fit. The trust has endeavoured to obtain some land in a more central position in Geraldton. The Government are favourably inclined towards granting the request. When this request is granted, as I think it will be, the trust propose to erect an up-to-date institute and memorial obelisk on a block of land close to the Geraldton railway station. A good deal of money will be required for this purpose. An Order-in-Council has been passed giving the institute power to dispose of the original building, which is

valued at between £3,000 and £4,000, to dispose of the blocks of land which form part of the assets of the organisation, and to use the proceeds to raise sufficient capital for the erection of the new building and memorial. The Bill merely rectifies an omission in the Act which constituted the trust some four or five years ago. It was drafted and agreed to by the late Attorney General, who had expressed his willingness to bring it down and give effect to the desires of the institute. Unfortunately, through his ill-health or some other reason, the Bill was not proceeded with, although the draft was in the Attorney General's office when I took over the portfolio. It is a non-contentious measure. The rights of no one are affected, and all that the measure does is to vest in the trust the blocks of land that were previously vested in the same organisation. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**MR. LATHAM** (York) [5.12]: I have no objection to the Bill. Apparently it hands over the blocks to the trust free of all encumbrances. I know a mistake was made when the Act of 1929 was passed. That was the measure which changed to a trust the title of those who were holding the property for the returned soldiers in Geraldton. I am prepared to accept the Minister's word for it, but it is remarkable to me that land of this nature should be liable to revert to the Crown.

The Minister for Justice: It was like a many dying intestate.

**Mr. LATHAM**: It could not revert to the Crown for a long time. It was intended that all the land, for which the original association held the title, should be transferred to the new body corporate. I am only concerned about the encumbrances upon the land. Is there likely to be any mortgage on the property?

The Minister for Justice: No. A claim was made for land tax, but the Treasurer was prepared to remit that.

**Mr. LATHAM**: The Bill provides that the land shall be free of all charges, and encumbrances in favour of the Crown. As the land will be free of all such charges, I have no objection to the passing of the Bill.

**THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE** (Hon. J. C. Willecock—Geraldton—in reply) [5.15]: I assure the hon. member that that is so. It is possible that perhaps the Geraldton water scheme, which is administered

by the Crown, may have assessed some of these blocks, but the Government are prepared to waive those charges. I may add that the Geraldton Municipal Council—

**Mr. Latham**: They are represented on this trust. They have a majority representation.

**The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE**: They have not raised any question with regard to payment of rates on the blocks because they were vested in the Returned Soldiers' Association. Strictly speaking, there would not be any other encumbrances. The Treasurer has promised that payment of land tax will be waived. Any possible contingency for water rates has been waived. It is proposed to hand over the blocks of land free from all those charges.

**Mr. Stubbs**: Will they be free of rates in the future?

**The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE**: No. The municipality are entitled, by virtue of their powers, to waive the payment of rates if they so desire.

**Mr. Latham**: But not without the authority of the Minister.

**The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE**: That is so. The building of the memorial institute will be proceeded with and it is the intention of the trustees to realise on these blocks. It is a very laudable desire to have a worthy memorial in Geraldton.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

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

## ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1933-34.

*In Committee of Supply.*

Resumed from the previous day; **Mr. Sleeman** in the Chair.

Department of Public Health (**Hon. S. W. Munsie**, Minister).

*Vote—Medical, £30,616:*

**THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH** (**Hon. S. W. Munsie—Hannans**) [5.25]: I occupied the time of the House for a considerable period last night, and I do not intend to do so again to-night. There is not

much that I can say in dealing with the Medical and Public Health Departments that I have not said on previous occasions, or that my predecessor, the present Leader of the Opposition, has not said during his term of office as Minister for Public Health. There are however one or two matters I may mention. The purpose of the Medical Department to a very large extent is to check and prevent where possible the spread of infectious diseases, and also to provide medical assistance where practicable. With that end in view, the Medical Department, for some considerable time, subsidised doctors in various parts of the State. We had subsidised doctors in almost all the outback towns at one period, but we found the scheme was not working satisfactorily. It was first intended to subsidise doctors with the object of getting them to practise in sparsely populated districts; but we found that in many of those districts the income of the doctors rose to over £2,000 a year. That scheme was consequently altered and a fresh subsidy scheme put into operation. Under that scheme the doctors received up to £750 per annum, but since the depression that subsidy has become subject to the provisions of the Financial Emergency legislation, and the amount was reduced to £600, at which it now stands. In existing circumstances, I think that is a fair thing. The granting of such a subsidy encourages a doctor to go to a sparsely populated centre. The agreement which he signs provides that he must keep books showing the income derived from his practice; and, if necessary, those books are to be open to the Auditor General for audit purposes. As I say, we guarantee the doctor £600 per annum. If in any one year his income is below that amount, the agreement provides that the local authority—or even a citizens' committee in the district, with responsible people on it—have to find one-third of the deficiency, the department making up the other two-thirds, so as to bring the doctor's salary up to £600 per annum. Although probably the specialists in Perth are still making a good income, I know of many cases in country districts where the doctor has been the hardest hit of any person in the district.

Mr. Sampson: They are frequently the last to be paid.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: There is no question about that, nor is there any

question about the fact that the depression has been the cause of many people having to avail themselves of free medical services. Wherever this scheme has not been in existence, the doctors have been hard hit; but where it is in existence, I am pleased to say that there are only about three or four places where we have had to make up a deficiency.

Mr. Seward: Is it obligatory on a doctor who participates in the scheme to attend indigent people?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Yes. As a matter of fact, the agreement provides that the doctor shall attend aborigines and indigent persons.

Mr. Latham: That is done by all the doctors.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Yes. No one can complain very much, although there are exceptions to the rule. There are isolated cases where doctors will try to get their pound of flesh, but, taking the profession as a whole, I do not think there is much ground for complaint with respect to charging people who cannot afford to pay.

Mr. Seward: I was not suggesting there was: I simply wanted the information.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: It happens sometimes that the department have also occasionally to contribute towards the travelling expenses of doctors. There have been several cases where it was absolutely essential that a doctor should go to a patient because the patient could not be taken to him. If the patient is in a position to pay, of course he pays what he can, but unfortunately in a number of those cases the patients have not been able to pay anything at all. One cannot expect a doctor to bear the expense of those long journeys in addition to giving his services free. The only alteration in the medical service that I can see looming in the distance at present is the possible establishment within the next five months of a branch of the aerial medical service. If that branch is established in Western Australia, it will be at Port Hedland. We have had in the State quite recently the Rev. Mr. Flynn and Dr. Allen Vickers. Dr. Vickers is the doctor who has had from 4½ to 5 years experience at Cloncurry. The Australian Inland Mission I claim is deserving of every credit for having instituted this aerial medical service. They have done magnificent work in pioneering it at Cloncurry in Queensland. They established themselves there towards the end of 1927. Of course, it was then purely an

experiment. The mission had innumerable difficulties to overcome in connection with its aerial medical service, but they were successful in surmounting practically all of them. Provision was made by the mission for a wireless set at Cloncurry. It was fairly powerful and could transmit messages, but the trouble was that there was only one-way traffic. The people outback could not send messages to the mission. Therefore, it was necessary for someone to proceed to the mission by motor car or motor bicycle, or on horseback or by foot. The doctor would then fly to wherever the patient might be. That frequently caused considerable delay. Now, by permission of the Broadcasting Commission and the Commonwealth Government, nearly all the outback stations within a radius of 700 miles from Cloncurry can transmit messages to the mission. That is to say, they have fairly powerful transmitters at various places, and smaller sets at various homes; sets capable of transmitting up to 200 miles. If they are farther than 200 miles from Cloncurry, they transmit to the nearest of the more powerful stations, which sends the message along. Thus they have succeeded in getting an almost complete service over that area in North Queensland. Those two gentlemen came here to see if they could secure interest in this State for the establishment of a similar service here. Personally I was of opinion that if such a station were to be established in Western Australia, the most suitable place for it would be Hall's Creek or Fitzroy Crossing. But those two gentlemen have a complete map showing every station and every place where people are employed, even on the outstations, at mining centres or anywhere else. When they displayed that map they convinced me that unquestionably Port Hedland is the best place for the establishment of the proposed station, and that if there are to be two stations the second must be either at Hall's Creek or at Ord River station. With those two stations they will be able to cover the whole of the North and North-West, down as far as Carnarvon. If any members present had the pleasure of listening to Dr. Vickers when he outlined what had been done in Queensland, it will be of no use my talking to those members, because Dr. Vickers has the faculty of convincing people to a much

greater extent than I have. I think on that occasion he must have convinced all those who heard him of the completeness of the scheme and of the necessity for it in outback districts. Lately we have been hearing a good deal of the necessity for populating the North. As a whole, our population is steadily increasing, but unfortunately in the outback it is decreasing. Having regard to the existing circumstances in the North, I do not wonder at that part of the State becoming depopulated, for it is scarcely reasonable to expect a man to ask his wife to live in some of those remote places in the North; it would be fair neither to him nor to her, and it would impose a positive injustice on their children. In those districts there are no means of medical service whatever. Many of the residents are 300 miles away from the nearest seaport where a doctor is to be found, and if anything happened, probably the patient would be dead before the doctor could arrive. So it is not reasonable to expect women to go out there, and I am positive the North will never be populated while only men live in those districts. The A.I.M. does not wish to retain control of that scheme any longer. They have pioneered it and proved it beyond the experimental stage. At Cloncurry they have proved its efficiency as a medical service. There is no question about that. Now they want to make it a national scheme. For that they require the co-operation of various Governments, including the Commonwealth Government. It is the duty of the Commonwealth Government to assist in the establishment of this national aerial medical service, for they control the Northern Territory, which constitutes a large portion of the North of Australia. There is one medical man at Darwin and another down at Alice Springs. If that vast territory is to be populated, some provision will have to be made for medical service. I understand the Commonwealth Government will co-operate, provided two of the State Governments also agree to co-operate. Queensland is at present paying a subsidy of £1,000 per annum, less of course the 20 per cent. financial emergency deduction. As proof of the efficiency of this aerial medical service established at Cloncurry, I may say there is a fairly well equipped hospital with a resident medical officer at that place, and there is another hospital 140 miles north of Clon-

curry and a third 120 miles south of Cloncurry, both of which three years ago had resident medical officers. Under their system of subsidy, the Queensland Government pays £1 7s. 6d. for every 12s. 6d. raised by the local people, thus making up £2. That is for any outback hospital, provided it maintains a resident medical officer. As I have said, there were such officers at those two hospitals north and south of Cloncurry. But with the advent of the depression it was felt that the community could no longer afford to keep them going, and as a result there was soon no resident medical officer at either of those two hospitals. Now this aerial scheme has proved so satisfactory to both the Government and the Medical Department of Queensland, that they recognise Dr. Vickers, stationed at Cloncurry, as the resident medical officer for each of those two hospitals north and south of Cloncurry. It sounds like a fairy tale, but it is true. Many instances quoted by Dr. Vickers would convince anyone that under the new scheme it is quite credible. I am not going any farther into the merits of that scheme, other than to say that this Government have agreed to bear a fair share as a subsidy towards the establishment of an aerial medical service in Western Australia, and to bear our quota towards the national scheme of aerial medical service. Those two gentlemen who visited us say that five extra stations will cover the whole of Australia from the point of view of the aerial medical service, if they get what they are after, if they get sufficient support. Already, as the A.I.M., they are generously supported by wealthy people in Victoria; in fact, Victoria provides their chief means of support. Both those gentlemen assured me they believed that for the purpose of a national aerial medical service they can easily raised £10,000 per annum in Victoria alone. I believe that with those five extra stations they will be able to cover the whole of Australia. If that scheme is brought about, three of those five stations will be in Western Australia, one at Port Hedland, a second at Hall's Creek or Ord River station, and the third at Kalgoorlie. There will be no aerial medical doctor at Kalgoorlie; all that will be provided there will be the aerial service, the local doctors having agreed to co-operate and furnish any medical service that may be required. The Pastoralists' Association of Western Australia are co-oper-

ating in this scheme. I discussed the matter with the president of the association on Saturday last, and as president of the association he assured me that he is prepared to do all that he can to further the scheme, and that in the near future they will set about raising the necessary funds. The pastoralists are deeply interested in this, for they live in the outback themselves. I am pleased to be able to announce that they desire to co-operate to the end that there may be an efficient medical service available in the remote districts of Western Australia. As to the other department, the Health Department, I think that in a general discussion it should be grouped with the Medical. I have nothing new to say regarding the Health Department. Because of the hard times we are experiencing, it has been found to be absolutely impossible to increase either the school medical service or the school dental service. I hope that next year we shall have at least two more officers, one medical and one dental. I am sure we shall continue to hear justifiable complaints until we have at least seven school dentists in Western Australia. We ought to have them, but under the existing financial conditions we cannot afford to pay them.

Mr. Sampson: But some dental service is given to country schools.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Yes, but at present we have only three dentists and two doctors, one of each being full-time in the country. As between the country and the metropolitan area, the country is getting a fair share of the services, although not so many country children can be examined, because of the distance the doctor or the dentist has to travel. I hope that will not continue very much longer. I am glad that, despite the financial position, the Treasurer has seen fit to allow sufficient money for the establishment of three additional infant health centres this year.

Mr. Latham: He might have afforded to do more than that, since he has taken that £14,000 from Wooroloo.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: The hon. member is very much interested in Wooroloo.

Mr. Latham: I am quite as much interested as you are.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I want the hon. member to believe that although Wooroloo has been included in the Health Vote, which means £14,000 extra,

not one penny less will be spent on public health because of that. The Wooroloo Sanatorium does come into this department, but it will not suffer any more than would have been the case had it been left under the Treasury. I do not intend to say anything further on these two votes other than again to express my appreciation of the good work that is being done by the Infant Health Clinics and the associations throughout Western Australia. I hesitate to think what the results in Western Australia would have been during the past two years had it not been for the Infant Health Associations. Even with the advice that they were able to give, and the treatment they were able to prescribe last year the infant mortality was greater than it was the year before. That, I think, is mainly due to the insufficient nourishment received by mothers. The depression is practically responsible for this, but I am satisfied in my own mind that the position would have been much worse if there had not been these 18 health centres in operation throughout the State. With the extra money that I have been able to get this year, as soon as the Wiluna people are ready, an infant health centre will be opened there. There is no doubt that that is a most important place at present for the establishment of an infant health centre. Month by month the number of women resident in Wiluna is increasing. No fewer than three times since the present Government have been in power have I had to appeal to the Lands Department to survey more residential blocks at Wiluna. Recently, 70 odd blocks were thrown open, and within two days all had gone, and as fast as men can get blocks, they are building homes and getting their wives up there. Anyone who has been to Wiluna, particularly in the summer months, will realise the necessity for giving advice as far as young children are concerned. Therefore the establishment of an infant health centre at Wiluna is a most essential work in the interests of the community in that town. The other centre will be established at South Perth. The third will depend upon who can comply with the conditions. Several towns have been agitating for infant health centres, but none has been able to comply with the conditions. I do not mind saying that I should like the centre to be at one of two places, Geraldton or Collie, both of which should have such a centre.

Mr. Latham: Collie had one.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Yes, but it did not last very long. Ever since then the Collie people have realised their mistake in letting it go. I have a considerable amount of information which I can place at the disposal of members if they desire it when we are dealing with the items.

**MR. LATHAM** (York) [5.52]: Before the Minister takes any action in the direction of establishing aerial medical services in the North I should like him to consider seriously several aspects. From the point of view of population Port Hedland is probably the most likely spot, and I feel sure that the member for Kimberley (Mr. Coverley) will bear me out when I say that the isolation of the northern parts of the State is a more serious matter than it is further south. From Port Hedland down there is a telephone service but from Derby onwards, and even for a considerable distance south of Derby there is complete isolation. I am told that it is impossible to maintain telephone lines in the far northern part of the State during three or four months of the year, for the reason that it is impossible to get over the roads. Consequently, I hope that that part of the State will be given consideration. On one occasion when I was in the north accompanied by the member for Kimberley, we came across a man who had been in bed for a fortnight or three weeks with no one to look after him. His stockman was out mustering, and his storekeeper was away having a poisoned arm treated. Consequently, the unfortunate man was left isolated, with only aborigines to look after him. My trip on that occasion convinced me that we should do something for those people. The isolation of the northern parts is such that an aerial service is essential today. There is complete isolation for about four months of the year. I know, of course, that the Minister would not be prejudiced in favour of one place at the expense of another.

The Minister for Health: I have been there and I know what it is like.

**Mr. LATHAM**: On one of the stations I saw a woman—she was one of the finest type I have seen in Western Australia—whose husband happened to be 40 miles away. One can imagine her loneliness, without any means of communication, and no hope of getting into touch with Wyndham or Hall's Creek. That is the type of person

we should try to assist. I hope also that the Minister will give some attention to the medical services along the coast. One hesitates to speak about the life in that part of the State, but it must be generally admitted that the climate rather tends to undermine the health of those who live there. Many medical men have occupied their posts in that part of the State for a considerable time, and they require to be physically fit to stand the climate. I believe that deterioration in health sets in very rapidly amongst the professional men in the North. It cannot be said that they are over-paid because I do not suppose that there are very many who get more than £300 or £400 a year, although there are one or two who receive up to £700 a year. The professional men should not be left in that part of the State for any very lengthy period. When I occupied the position of Minister for Health I wanted Dr. Atkinson to visit that part of the State and see for himself. In the interests of the residents of the North, and of the State also, we should give those people the best we can. At present they are cramped and if we were able to supply an aerial service, it would help to create for them generally a greater interest in their surroundings. The trip that I had to the North with the representatives of that part of the State, convinced me that we would be justified in doing something for the people who live there.

The Minister for Health: That is, give them something better than they have had.

Mr. LATHAM: One station manager told me that it cost him £60 to obtain the services of a doctor for his wife. That man probably would not be receiving more than £240 a year. We should aim at giving medical services at a reasonable cost, a cost that the people of the North could afford to pay. What would it matter if we gave free services as a reward for what those people are doing for Western Australia. We certainly should give free services as far as we possibly can for those in the interior. There is another matter to which I wish to refer. The Minister spoke about the relief to the revenue by the transfer to the medical fund of the £14,000, the cost of administering the Wooroloo Sanatorium. The Treasurer must have got on the weak side of the Minister; I do not know how the Minister allowed this to happen.

The Minister for Health: You can rest assured I did not allow it.

Mr. LATHAM: Not unless there was a quid pro quo. I cannot imagine the Minister giving away anything, and I do not know how he allowed that £14,000 odd to go. Anyway, the fund is being built up from year to year, and we hope that it will be built up still further. All claims against that fund will be met for quite a long time. I can go around the State, as the Minister does, and see the great amount of work that is being done by the hospitals that have been established for some years, all of which are maintained well up to the standard.

The Minister for Health: It was never intended that the fund should carry the building cost.

Mr. LATHAM: It has up to date.

The Minister for Health: It was never intended that it should.

Mr. LATHAM: I quite agree, but we were able to spare a few pounds from it. All things considered, we did a fair amount. I could tell you of quite a number of hospitals that have benefited.

The Minister for Health: There were only two jobs, one £500 and another £900.

Mr. LATHAM: The sum of £1,500 was allocated to the hospital at Subiaco.

The Minister for Health: Do you mean the King Edward Memorial Hospital?

Mr. LATHAM: Yes. We also found £900 for Merredin. We found sums also for Moora and Morawa, and we set aside an amount for Fremantle.

The Minister for Health: Not out of the hospital fund.

Mr. LATHAM: Yes, out of the hospital fund. I think you will find that £1,000 was set aside for Fremantle. Then we set aside a sum of money, I think, for Wiluna. I hope the Minister will be able to get sufficient money from the fund to maintain what has been done in the past. Treasury officers are always jealous of a Minister having a few pounds to spend, but there is no better way of spending money than by looking after the sick. I became very interested in this work after I assumed office as Minister for Health. I had little knowledge of it before then, and it is probably for that reason that I was appointed Minister. I know the interest that is taken in the work by all those associated with it, particularly by Dr. Stang. I do not think it would be possible to obtain a more competent lady in Australia to do this particular kind of

work. I notice there is still some money available for the present year, and I believe it would be wisely spent if utilised in this way. I desire to warn the Minister not to allow the Treasurer to get a greater control of the money from the hospital fund.

**MR. NORTH** (Claremont) [6.3]: I desire to ask the Minister a question with respect to dental treatment. It has been asserted that three out of every four children in the State are troubled with bad teeth. Several statements have appeared in the Press assigning a cause for this trouble. I think the people should be warned what to do and what to avoid, so as to overcome these dental troubles. Possibly there are officers in the department who are qualified to explain in a simple way to the people what they should do to avoid the present trouble. It is better to take precautionary measures than to try to cure the trouble after it has started. I believe there is a difference of opinion among the authorities as to the cause of dental trouble. Some say it is due to a deficiency in milk. Others say the trouble is due to people eating too much cooked food and not sufficient uncooked food. If the department have some simple remedy to offer, then they should let the people know it, because I am told that dental trouble is the cause of most other diseases.

The Minister for Health: That is so.

**Mr. NORTH:** We have also been told that the trouble starts before birth. Perhaps the department could arrange to distribute, through the medium of registry offices and churches, a pamphlet explaining to people about to be married what they should do to prevent their children suffering from dental trouble. We should attack the trouble at its source.

**Mr. Latham:** They would be too busy to read the pamphlet.

**Mr. NORTH:** At least the lady should be advised what her diet should consist of for the first year or two after her marriage.

**Mr. Griffiths:** Is this more reform?

**Mr. NORTH:** I am satisfied that many thousands of pounds and much misery would be saved if this matter were attacked in its initial stage.

**MR. NEEDHAM** (Perth) [6.6]: I desire to draw attention to the accommodation provided at the Perth Public Hospital for in-patients. Some little time ago I asked for a return to be placed on the Table of the

House showing the income derived from the Hospital Tax Act. That information was supplied. I find that, from the inception of the tax to the end of the present financial year, an amount of £344,761 was raised by the tax. At the time the tax was imposed it was, I think, understood that further accommodation would be provided at the Perth Public Hospital for in-patients. In answer to my question whether it had been provided, I was informed that nothing had been done in the matter. Whilst I realise the financial difficulties of the Minister and of the department, I also realise the necessity for providing ample accommodation at the hospital. One never knows at what time additional accommodation will be required. I hope we shall not be visited by an epidemic, but I think it is false economy simply to depend upon the barest possible accommodation.

The Minister for Health: The accommodation is not there for necessitous cases.

**Mr. NEEDHAM:** Something should be done to provide that accommodation. The return shows there has been a vast increase in the number of out-patients; but I would like to hear some statement from the Minister as to whether it is the Government's intention to provide additional accommodation for in-patients. I am not making any complaint about the kind of accommodation provided at the hospital. As far as I can ascertain, that is in every way satisfactory. There is, however, certainly a widespread complaint that it is insufficient. It was in the mind of the general public when the hospital tax was imposed that steps would be taken to increase the accommodation for in-patients, and notwithstanding the financial difficulties under which we are labouring, I think the Government ought to take steps to provide it.

**MR. SAMPSON** (Swan) [6.10]: I desire to amplify a question which I submitted to the House some time ago in connection with hospital matters, and I hope the Minister will be able to assist me. On the 10th August last I asked whether an indemnity in the form of a fidelity bond or other approved guarantee was required from officers handling the funds or keeping the accounts of committee hospitals, and, if not, whether the Minister would give consideration to that matter. The Minister replied that he would. He said the Hospitals Act, 1927, provides that an officer who is to be entrusted with moneys shall not be appointed until he gives

adequate security for the faithful discharge of his duties. I dare say that is all right; I hope it is, but I would draw attention to a statement appearing in the "Northern Producer," a newspaper published at Morawa. In the issue of that paper dated 3rd June, it is stated that, as a result of a departmental auditor's visit to check the accounts of the Morawa district hospital, it was reported to a special meeting of the committee that the books showed discrepancies for which the secretary was allegedly responsible. The matter was afterwards reported to the police and later, as members will recall, the secretary died. I do not want to go into that. It was a very painful matter. The person who acted as secretary was also bookkeeper for a number of business people in the district, and it is stated in the "Northern Producer" that he was also secretary of the hospital. He died under tragic circumstances. On the 5th August the same newspaper reported that the late secretary's defalcations amounted to over £200. It does not follow, of course, that because a newspaper publishes such a statement that it is correct, but I have read this paper each week since and no correction of the statement has appeared.

Mr. Rodoreda: Would you guarantee the correctness of what appeared in a newspaper?

Mr. SAMPSON: I say that I am not guaranteeing the correctness of what appeared in this newspaper, but I have read it each week since and have not noticed any correction of the statement.

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

Mr. SAMPSON: Before tea, I was referring to the "hospital sensation," as it was styled in the Morawa newspaper, relating to the secretary who was found dead and to the charge of stealing funds that I understand was launched. I thought that the Auditor General might have made some reference to the matter, inasmuch as the accounts were stated to show a deficiency of £200. During the tea adjournment, I took a quick glance at portions of the Auditor General's report, but I could find no reference to the matter. There were references to the alleged defalcation of £200 in connection with the committee hospital at Morawa, to an employee of the Medical Department failing to bring back £16 from the bank, the amount representing

the salaries of the staff, and also to a shortage in connection with child welfare funds.

The Minister for Health: That has nothing to do with the Medical Department.

Mr. SAMPSON: I am aware that it does not come under this Vote. I feel sure the Minister will be able to supply us with some information, but it is a fact that the answer given to my question on the 10th August did not, it would appear on the surface, give the facts. If a fidelity bond was taken out, I should be pleased to hear of it, and I should not be surprised if I were told that every thing was in order. At the same time, I consider we should have the information, and if no fidelity guarantee bond was taken out, we should know why that essential precaution regarding the funds of the Morawa hospital, was not provided for. As explained by the Minister, that is an essential under the Hospitals Act. There is one other health matter I wish to refer to, although it relates, more or less, to the Perth City Council. That body is the health authority for the municipality of Perth, but I take it the health department of the Perth City Council is subservient to the Minister. Some time ago I asked a question with a view to inquiring whether he was aware that nuisances, injurious to public health, were being encouraged, if not enforced, by the early closing of public latrines before the theatres closed. I also asked him whether, in the interests of the health of the public and of the sanitation of the city, he would endeavour to remedy that state of affairs. The Minister replied that the City Council closed the latrines at 11.30 p.m. I know the Minister answered my questions in accordance with what he thought were the facts.

The Minister for Health: I answered in accordance with the information supplied to the Health Department by the Perth City Council.

Mr. SAMPSON: I know it is more a matter for the City Council, but, as the health of the people is involved, I venture again to refer to it. The Minister has been misinformed, and there is grave danger to the health of the people when the latrines are closed so early in the evening. As I indicated in my question, it frequently results in public nuisances being committed. I was much interested in the remarks of the Minister regarding the work of the Australian Inland Mission, which is portion of the activities of the Presbyterian Church.

The mission is much more than a religious undertaking. It does work in addition that means a great deal to those who live inland. I was able at first hand to learn something of the efforts of the Australian Inland Mission when, a little while ago, I travelled from Alice Springs to Darwin, returning down the coast to Fremantle. At Alice Springs, I found a hostel—it is really a small hospital—conducted by the A.I.M. There were two nurses, and, as may be expected, those girls are thoroughly efficient and most ready to assist sick cattlemen, linesmen and others who require their help. As a matter of fact, the A.I.M. and other similar organisations are doing a tremendous work in the far inland portions of this great continent. In order to cover such a wide area, it is realised that an aerial service is necessary. The A.I.M., or "Flynn of the Inland," as one of the leaders of the movement is referred to, has had, for a long time, as an objective, the establishment of a flying doctor to cover parts of the immense areas of the central, north, and north-western portions of Australia. Although known as the Australian Inland Mission, the work that is carried out is not restricted to inland areas. There are small hostels, or hospitals, on the coast of Queensland and Western Australia. In this State, hostels have been established at Esperance, Port Hedland and, I have no doubt, at other centres along the coast.

The Minister for Health: The institution at Esperance is not solely that of the A.I.M.

Mr. SAMPSON: I understood the A.I.M. established the hostel there.

Mr. Latham: And also one at Lake Grace.

Mr. SAMPSON: At any rate, the A.I.M. is doing a tremendous amount of work.

The Minister for Health: The sisters are doing splendid work, but at Esperance it is not solely an A.I.M. effort. The mission provided the nursing staff.

Mr. SAMPSON: It is gratifying, too, to know that the work is by no means sectarian. In addition to the Presbyterian Church, work is also undertaken by the Methodist Church, the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, and each takes a broad view. They are out to help. Wherever one goes, those bodies will be found working to the utmost of their ability, governed only by the limitation of finances, in the interests of the sick. For a long time it has been the ambition of the A.I.M. to

provide a medical service by means of flying doctors. It is a scheme about which we may easily enthuse, and I hope it will become an established fact before long. Already much has been done, but one essential is that the small transmitting sets required shall be so efficient that station owners and settlers throughout central Australia and the northern parts of the continent, shall be able to send message to the flying doctors.

The Minister for Health: At present they can get anything within 700 miles of Cloncurry.

Mr. SAMPSON: That is very satisfactory. I know the difficulty has been to secure efficient transmitting sets.

Mr. Latham: One of your countrymen in Adelaide found one for them.

Mr. SAMPSON: Efficient sets sufficiently cheap are what are necessary. I join with the Minister in expressing pleasure that this great boon is in the way of being provided. The need of medical service is perhaps the greatest felt in these far-distant lonely areas. It is exceedingly dangerous for a man, let alone a woman, to live in that part of Australia, knowing that he is some weeks removed from a doctor. When the services of doctors are made available, more of our own womenfolk, the true complement to our own people settled in the North, will be able to live there and that will at least partially solve the semi-coloured problem of the North. The work of medical science is one that cannot be left entirely either to the A.I.M. or to the Government. The people generally should realise that if we are to hold Australia, we must use Australia. We cannot use the country unless we care for those who live in far-distant parts. Those who think they know Australia, who know the capital cities alone, know comparatively little of the Commonwealth. Cities are much alike—a conglomeration of bricks and mortar.

Mr. Rodoreda: And newspapers.

Mr. SAMPSON: When one travels through the central parts of Australia, through those great open spaces to be traversed there, one commences to learn something of what Australia is, and how little development has taken place in those parts. I do not know that it would be a good thing for members of Parliament to go to Central Australia for any length of time, because the people there are disinclined to

talk. They have developed a silence which perhaps, since one's duty in this House is to speak, would be rather embarrassing to members. I did have it in mind to ask the Minister to go there, but if he were there for any undue length of time, we might in the end wonder whether the same gentleman had returned.

The CHAIRMAN: Is the hon. member going to connect this with the Medical Vote?

M. SAMPSON: In my opinion, when the problem of providing medical service to the people of the inland is solved, many other problems of the inland will be solved. It will then be possible for women to live there without the grave anxiety which they must feel to-day. As a matter of fact, it is impossible for women to live there now, because, in certain circumstances, medical attention is essential. I am pleased that the Minister has taken up this matter wholeheartedly, and I hope it will not be left to the Government alone to support the A.I.M. but that it will have the general support of the whole community. In my opinion, the Government of Western Australia take a more serious view than do the Federal Government of matters relating to the development of the North. I could dilate upon that and point out that from Alice Springs to Birdum, a distance of 647 miles, I did not see a culvert or a bridge, whereas out from Wyndham I noticed that the Western Australian Main Roads Board had done something to make it possible for travellers to get over the creeks and rivers. That is in marked distinction from the attitude of the Commonwealth. I was pleased to hear the strictures of the member for Perth on the lack of accommodation at the Perth Hospital. I am aware that the great difficulty is the provision of funds. There is a general knowledge of the need of more wards and thus more hospital accommodation. Only the other day a friend of mine told me that while it was declared necessary for him to go into hospital for an operation, it is impossible for him to be received until the end of January. That is a very bad position. I hope the Minister will be able to get the funds necessary for the erection of one or more wards. It cannot be put off very much longer, for the pressure on the accommodation at the Perth Hospital is becoming greater every day and, with the extension

of settlement in the outer suburban areas, which are dependent on Perth for medical services, it becomes more and more incumbent on the authorities that this accommodation should be provided. In my opinion, it should take first place, even before the development of the country; certainly the construction of railways is not nearly so important as the provision of sufficient hospital accommodation. I hope the Minister will not let down on this, but will persist in his endeavours to see that the needs of the people are provided for. A great deal could be said on that subject but, after all, to say it briefly is perhaps just as effective as to talk at length. Every member of the House, I am sure, will endorse what I have said, namely that there is a shortage of accommodation in the Perth Hospital, and that that accommodation should be provided at the earliest moment. If hospital service be a criterion of civilisation. I hope we shall endeavour to live up to our claims that we are civilised; but there is some criticism in that respect at the present moment.

MR. GRIFFITHS (Avon) [7.50]: I should like to endorse what has been said by the Leader of the Opposition. I know from the womenfolk at the various institutions with which I have come into contact that Dr. Stang, the Supervisor of Infant Health Centres and School Medical Officer, has marked ability, and is very tactful. She has done wonderfully fine work and is spoken of in the highest possible terms. I was interested in what the member for Claremont had to say as to the cause of all this trouble regarding dental matters. As I heard some member remark, he is looking for reform once more. It was amusing to hear the Minister for Health and the Leader of the Opposition arguing over matters of policy in regard to the hospital tax, for we know that both gentlemen are intensely interested in seeing that the money is properly applied. But there is another matter of policy to which I would draw the attention of the Minister. I was very interested in what Dr. Mitchell had to say in conversation the other night about the Wooroloo Sanatorium. He spoke of what was being done at Papworth, some 12 miles from Cambridge. It is known as the Papworth Village Settlement, and it caters for tubercular patients in various stages. In 1918 it was situated at a little place called Bourne, but the accommodation proved to be too small, and so it was re-

moved to Papworth. They have there 390 beds for patients. The subject of tuberculosis concerns us very greatly. I was interested when Dr. Mitchell pointed out to me what was being done at Papworth. He refers to it in his report, where he shows the effect of vocational work, or what might be termed after-care, in preventing a man from relapsing when on the way to recovery. Application to suitable work, Dr. Mitchell said, would greatly strengthen the patient's resistance to any return of the disease. Let me read this extract from Dr. Mitchell's report—

One of the greatest weaknesses in administration of the tuberculosis problem one has to contend with is the tendency to regard the condition of one diagnosed as "tuberculosis" to be synonymous with total incapacity, resulting in murder from over-treatment, and suicide from ineptitude and dry rot. I feel strongly and speak strongly. Any pension or compensation which precludes continuance of remunerative employment is defeating the purpose for which it was introduced, and I think in this respect the invalidity pension is worthy of review, particularly as regards tuberculosis. From an economic standpoint there is room for much advance in dealing with the position. It largely exists due to phthisophobia and refusal of the public to realise that association with an educated and careful tuberculosis individual does not necessarily mean infection to others.

Then in regard to vocational work, the doctor says—

The therapeutic value of suitable work cannot be stressed too strongly. There is no disease in which the psychic element looms more strongly, and one of the greatest factors assisting arrival at the stage of mens sana in corpore sano, is work of a suitable nature.

He then goes on to speak of the miner who has spent his life underground, after which he continues—

Hark back to Papworth and see what is provided there. Vocational training is given in bag making and leather work, carpentering, printing, etc. Commercial travellers are employed to dispose of the articles produced which have a ready market, the result being an income commensurate with the growth of the place. Starting from scratch, they now dispose of some £70,000 worth of manufactured goods.

The doctor has the idea that the principle underlying this might well be applied here, and he says for a start we have the Darling Range, a natural sanatorium in itself, with pure air and good scenery, and everything that would assist to bring a patient back to normal. The idea applied industrially

at Papworth he thinks could be applied in the Ranges, where we have thousands of acres of land fit for little else than fruit-growing. He quoted the old slogan about three acres and a cow, and he thought it might be applied to the restoration of a number of tubercular patients. He held that some settlement akin to Papworth should be started there, where, despite the low market prices, the patients could take on fruit-growing. He thinks it would provide good scope for fine work in the recovery of those men. After all, as the doctor pointed out, health is perhaps the main thing. Some of the work suggested for the patients may not be a very payable proposition at the moment, but it is better for them to do something for a moderate living than to lay their bones in Karrakatta. I wish to refer to another matter which may appear parochial, but with which the Minister is conversant, and that is a base hospital for Merredin. Six railways converge at Merredin, and consequently there is a large concentration of railway workers. Merredin also has a brewery employing a large number of men, and it is a centre for the gold-fields water supply. Although the hospital accommodation is being improved, there is such a large population to cater for that, with the quota of patients being sent from outside districts, it is necessary to have a base hospital. The surrounding road boards, I understand, have been approached on the question of their contributing to the cost. I hope the Minister will be able to make some announcement when he replies to the debate. Dr. Stang is a fine officer who has carried out her work well, but that applies also to many other officers of the department. From the Principal Medical Officer and the secretary of the department right down, there is an enthusiasm that is equalled only by that displayed by the officials of the Education Department.

**MR. THORN** (Toodyay) [8.2]: In speaking on this vote one does so with great satisfaction, knowing how sympathetic is the Minister for Health. We are quite sure that his sole objective is to relieve and help the suffering. I should like to speak briefly about the Wooroloo Sanatorium. There we have a large number of sick miners, as well as patients from other walks of life. Last year the then Government restricted the

water supply to the sanatorium. I hope it will be the policy of the present Government to allow the sanatorium all the water required. One of the pleasures of life left to the patients is the growing of flowers. I am a member of the Woorloo Welfare Committee, who undertake to supply the patients with plants, and I hope the Minister will see that the patients get all the water required for their gardening work. At the recent Royal Show the sanatorium farm took the first prize for its dairy herd, and we should give those responsible all possible encouragement. The previous Government instituted a policy of land clearing at Woorloo, and I am pleased to say that the present Government have lately pursued that policy. We wish to make the sanatorium self-supporting. The clearing policy provides all the wood the institution requires, and we have a gardener who supplies all the vegetables required. What we desire is to make the dairy self-supporting. We have the land, and the opportunity exists to clear it and lay down pastures. I believe the cost of fodder for the dairy herd is £1,400 a year. As we have the land, it would be far better to produce the necessary fodder for the herd. The soil is quite suitable for growing subterranean clover and other fodders.

The Minister for Employment interjected.

Mr. THORN: I appreciate greatly the fact that the Government are carrying out that policy. It is the right policy to make the institution self-supporting, seeing that the necessary land is available. I congratulate the Minister on the support he is giving, in conjunction with Dr. Stang, to the Infant Welfare department. We cannot do too much in that direction. The advice given is of inestimable value. Young mothers are often absolutely distressed and nervous with the concern of bringing up their little ones, and the department are performing a great service. One has only to think a little in order to appreciate the value of the work being done. Being a man on the land and not always located within a convenient distance of medical assistance, I realise the value of the help being rendered to nursing mothers. I again appeal to the Minister to see that the Woorloo patients get all the water they require. If there is one thing calculated to brighten their unhappy position, it is the production of flowers. I always think that anyone who is not a lover of flowers is not worth knowing, because he has

no real interest in life. If we wish to give those patients an interest in life, we should ensure them an adequate supply of water and encourage them in every possible way to produce the flowers that help to make life for them worth while.

**MR. McLARTY** (Murray-Wellington) [8.11]: I should like to express my gratitude to the Health Department for the sympathetic treatment given to hospitals in country districts. As a result of that help, the hospitals have become much more efficient, and people in the country have gained confidence in them. Because of this, the Perth Hospital and the Children's Hospital are being relieved, and I feel sure they will be relieved to a much greater extent in future. I should like to ask the Minister whether it is possible to make a uniform charge for patients' fees in committee-run hospitals. I know Western Australia is a large State, and that it is hardly likely the principle could be applied throughout, but we have hospitals only a few miles apart, at which different daily charges are made. It would be in the interests of the hospitals and the committees if a uniform charge could be arranged. I should also like to ask the Minister's policy regarding the distance that should separate hospitals. Where population has increased to a considerable extent, the provision of hospital accommodation might be warranted, but it would be a mistake to erect a hospital within a few miles of an established hospital. It might be possible to define the boundaries of the district that a certain hospital should serve. The Minister referred appreciatively to the amount of honorary work that many Perth doctors are being asked to perform. I agree with his remarks, but they apply just as much to the country as to the metropolitan area.

The Minister for Health: More so to the country area.

Mr. McLARTY: Yes, particularly where we have sustenance camps established. Often a doctor is not able to collect even the running costs for attending patients. The boards which run these hospitals do not in the majority of cases feel justified in asking sustenance men to pay hospital dues, but it is hardly fair to ask the doctor to attend these men without remuneration. In the larger camps a medical fund has been started, and the doctor is paid for his ser-

vices, but in the smaller camps, where there is no fund, the doctor does not even get his running costs. I hope some way will be devised whereby the doctor will be rewarded to some extent. The member for Claremont referred to the dental treatment of children. In his last annual report the Commissioner of Public Health says that during the past two years 51 metropolitan and suburban schools were visited by dental officers and 17 country schools. I realise it is more difficult to visit country schools.

The Minister for Health: I think that is a misprint.

Mr. McLARTY: The Commissioner says he submits a report of the activities of the school dental officers for the two years ended December, 1932, showing that during this period 51 metropolitan and suburban and 17 country schools were visited; and that the number of the latter is much less than in the previous two years owing to the financial stringency causing the abandonment of the country work during the whole of 1931.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Many country schools have never seen a dental officer.

The Minister for Health: At that time both of the dental officers were restricted to the metropolitan area.

Mr. McLARTY: I know that the financial position has been difficult, but 17 is a very small number of schools to have been visited in the country. I take it most of them were close to the metropolitan area.

The Minister for Health: Wiluna is included in the 17.

Mr. McLARTY: I know the Minister is not only enthusiastic but sympathetic, and I hope he will do all that is possible to have more country schools visited by the dental officers during the coming year. I am glad that visits have been paid to the Fairbridge Farm School, where there are something like 300 children, and that other institutions of a similar character have been visited. It is the first duty of the Government to see that the children in these institutions receive dental treatment. Their health is to a large extent dependent on the condition of their teeth, and they have no other means of getting treatment than through the department. I am very glad these institutions have been attended to.

MR. RODOREDA (Roebourne) [8.20]: I know the Minister has been very keen and enthusiastic in all matters relating to health, and that he would do a great deal more but for the financial limitations placed upon him by the Treasurer. I should like to commend him and the Government for the part they are playing in connection with the aerial medical service, more especially as the first agitation for this commenced in my electorate, and my constituents have been very keen upon it ever since. It will give them great pleasure to know the Government are prepared to play their part in bringing this service into operation. Other members have also expressed their appreciation in this regard. Evidently every member in this Chamber is in agreement with the object of the scheme. It is very hard for anyone who has not lived in the North-West to realise the conditions under which people, especially those who are inland, have to live there. This is the finest thing the Government, or any previous Government, have done towards helping the people of the North-West. It is a practical step in the right direction. It is beyond the experimental stages, for it has been proved to have been an absolute success in Queensland. The installation of broadcasting facilities for the country will also help the settlers. It will bring them into touch with civilisation generally. Portions of my electorate are just as isolated as the Kimberleys, and people are settled 250 miles from Roebourne and have no telephonic communication with the outside world. The provision of wireless facilities, with a central receiving and transmitting station, will keep them in touch with everything, the movements of stock, ships, etc. The Leader of the Opposition expressed the opinion that the Kimberleys would be a better place for the establishment of this service. The question has been thoroughly investigated by the A.I.M. and by the residents of the North-West. It is agreed that Port Hedland is the best centre at which to inaugurate the service. No doubt in a couple of years another base will be provided in the Kimberleys. Port Hedland, however, has an aerodrome equipped with hangars, and a machine is always stationed there. All the facilities for repairs to planes exist at that centre which will serve a larger number of people than would a station in the Kimberleys. At a pinch the latter

place could be served from Port Hedland, because there is no point in the Kimberleys that is further by air than 600 miles or so from Port Hedland. The Cloncurry base serves just as large an area. I am pleased that the Government are prepared to do their share in this direction. Contingent upon that undertaking, donations have been promised by the majority of the pastoralists, who would have declined to contribute a penny if the Government did not also help. No doubt before March next the service will be in operation. The member for Claremont referred to the dental treatment of children. Some authoritative pamphlet ought to be issued by the Medical Department on this question. Within the last two or three weeks I have read conflicting so-called authoritative statements which have appeared in the newspapers on the question of pyrrhoen. One statement set forth that it was inadvisable to use a toothbrush so severely as to cause the gums to bleed, because all sorts of ill-effects would follow, and another statement was to the effect that one should use a toothbrush hard enough to make the gums bleed. Readers of those statements are left in a state of doubt as to what to do.

The Minister for Employment: You pay your money and you take your choice.

Mr. RODORED: Some official statement should be issued on the subject. I congratulate the Government upon their intention to abandon the system of leased hospitals in the North-West. These were taken out of Government control and handed over to matrons. I understand that that system is being abandoned as the leases fall due, and that the institutions will be brought under Government control so as to come into line with the aerial medical scheme. I should like the Minister to make clear the question of subsidies to doctors. Are they paid direct to doctors in the North-West irrespective of any private practice they may have, or paid as a sort of guarantee?

The Minister for Health: They are paid irrespective of the private practice they have. The North-West doctors are not on the scheme which provides for a given amount being made up.

Mr. RODORED: They do get a subsidy?

The Minister for Health: Most of them are resident magistrates as well.

Mr. RODORED: As there is no chance of the dental officers being sent to the North-West, I would suggest the doctors should inspect the school children's teeth periodically and give that treatment free. The Leader of the Opposition said he would be prepared to recommend free treatment for all the people in the North-West. He is in a position to say that now.

Mr. Needham: He is a brave man in opposition.

Mr. Latham: I did not say "all the people in the North-West."

Mr. RODORED: I thought so.

Mr. Latham: I was referring to inland residents.

Mr. RODORED: The hon. member should have said so. I hope his suggestion will be adopted for the treatment of the children. If the doctor visits one of the schools and sends a report to the parents, they say that their children are all right and can eat their mutton and bread, and that the doctor only wants to get a few shillings out of them. They therefore do not send their children to be treated. The doctors up there have plenty of time on their hands and could easily carry out these inspections. If the suggestion were adopted, it would be a great help to the children as well as the parents. I understand that any donation that is given to a Government hospital can be deducted from the hospital tax of the donor. Leased hospitals do not come within this arrangement. When they are again brought under the control of the Government, people in the North-West, instead of paying a hospital tax, can make a donation to the local institution, and will know that the money will be spent in the North-West and not on some hospital in the metropolitan area. At present we cannot do it. I understand the A.I.M. hospital is treated under this regulation as a Government hospital. The only other matter I would like to bring under the Minister's notice is that there is not now a maternity ward in the hospital at Onslow. There has not been one for some very considerable time and it is a scandal that such a position should be allowed to continue. At present, there are three or four expectant mothers in Onslow who have no option but to go either to Carnarvon, 350 miles away, or to Roebourne, 200 miles the other way,

to receive attention, or else stay in Onslow and take the risk of what happens. That is not fair treatment of those expectant mothers and I am sure the matter has merely to be brought under the Minister's notice for him to take prompt action to alter the position.

**THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH** (Hon. S. W. Munsie—Hannans—in reply) [8.32]: I desire to-night again to thank hon. members for the way in which they have received these Estimates. Really, I have very little to reply to, as the speeches generally have been complimentary rather than critical. The member for Claremont (Mr. North) asked whether it would be possible to get some definite information from the Medical Department as to the cause of the prevailing dental trouble. At present I do not think it is possible, because this is a case where the experts, like the economists, differ. There are hardly two of the same opinion. I would say, however, that if the work now being carried out by the Infant Health Association could be extended and carried to its logical conclusion, it would go far towards remedying the defects in children's teeth. I believe much of the trouble would be avoided if children were fed naturally instead of artificially. The member for Perth (Mr. Needham) stressed the necessity for additional accommodation at the Perth Public Hospital. He said that a large section of the public was led to believe that with the inauguration of the hospital fund tax, additional accommodation would be provided at the hospital. I do not know how any member of the public got that impression, because it was stated quite freely when the Bill was introduced, that it would be difficult even to maintain the hospitals if the tax were introduced under the conditions then proposed. Personally, I have no doubt that the hospital fund tax is insufficient to provide for the maintenance of the hospitals as they should be maintained, let alone provide an extra building fund. It was never intended that the fund should provide for additional buildings, but unfortunately moneys have had to be provided from the fund for that purpose and the fund is being utilised for that purpose to-day. The member for Perth also inquired whether there was anything on foot to provide for increased accommoda-

tion at the Perth Public Hospital. In reply to my hon. friend, I say, no, there is not; and what is more, there will not be. There is no room on the present site of the Perth Public Hospital to build another ward.

Mr. Needham: Cannot you build higher?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: That is not practicable, either. The time is long overdue for extra hospital accommodation in the metropolitan area, but that will mean the expenditure of a very considerable sum of money which cannot be found at present, unless from loan funds. It certainly cannot be provided from revenue at the present time.

Mr. Needham: Would it not be a worthy object?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Yes. A scheme is on foot that will give relief to the Perth Public Hospital. Plans have been drawn for some considerable time now and I have made requests for money to proceed with the scheme. Unfortunately, the money is not yet available. The scheme I refer to is to make the King Edward Memorial Hospital not only a maternity hospital, but a women's hospital also. In my opinion, in the interests of all concerned, the patients, the trainees and the nursing staff, it should be a women's hospital. We have an estimate that the necessary work, including an operating theatre, which is absolutely essential, would cost £18,000. If we could find that sum, and carry out the proposed work, it would absolutely empty one ward at the Perth Public Hospital, thus giving accommodation there for 40 additional patients. That would relieve the present congestion at the Perth Public Hospital. Let me say that the committee of the Perth Public Hospital, the Resident Medical Officer, the Commissioner of Public Health, and the chairman of the Hospital Board, in addition to the officers of the Health Department, and myself as Minister, has given this matter very much thought, and has made three or four recommendations as to the manner in which the congestion at the Perth Hospital can be relieved. They have placed their recommendations in numerical order, and each recommends first that the conversion of the King Edward Memorial Hospital into a women's hospital is the best means of overcoming the difficulty.

Mr. Needham: Will the Minister make provision for that?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Unfortunately, I do not control the funds. The member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) read a question which he asked me recently and also the answer I gave in connection with the provision by secretaries of committee hospitals of a fidelity bond. The reply I gave was absolutely accurate. The Hospital Act does make such provision. I would also point out to the member for Swan that it is incumbent on every committee hospital to-day to notify the Health Department of every change in the personnel of the board. Each year the names of the members of the board conducting the hospital must be submitted to the Executive Council for approval. Under the Hospitals Act the board is a body corporate and can sue and be sued. It is not the function of the Health Department to see that the secretary of each individual committee hospital takes out a fidelity bond. That is the duty of the hospital committee itself, and if I attempted to interfere in the matter I would be told by some of the committee hospitals to mind my own business, and I think they would be justified in telling me to do so. The Act makes provision that the committee shall indemnify itself against defalcations by the secretary and if the members of the committee fail in that duty then they are jointly and severally liable to the institution for any loss, should anyone take action against them.

Mr. Sampson: I think it would be better if the committee submitted a report.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Yes. If they do not do so, however, do not ask me, as Minister for Public Health, to see that they do. I was responsible for the introduction of the Hospitals Act. Surely the committee ought to see to these matters for themselves.

Mr. Sampson: No objection could be raised to the requirement of the submission of an annual report giving those particulars.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: No, none whatever. The member for Avon (Mr. Griffiths) stressed the necessity for improvements to the Merredin hospital. There is not the slightest doubt that improvements are required at that hospital, but Merredin will have to do the same as all other hospitals from now on: if improvements are required, then, just as Katanning, Bunbury, Collie, and all other places have to do, they will have to find their share of the money.

Even with regard to Northam, which has long been recognised as a Government hospital, I stood out for two and a half years against building a ward unless Northam contributed its quota of the cost, which eventually it did. We should not compel one section of the community to find half the money required for building purposes and then say to another section, "Because your hospital is a general hospital, and because it is central, we will find all the money."

Mr. Griffiths: I think they realise that.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I was very pleased indeed when I received a notification a month or five weeks ago stating that a conference was to be convened for the purpose of seeing whether some agreement could not be come to for each district to pay its own quota. In my opinion, they ought to do so. The member for Toodyay (Mr. Thorn) mentioned the fact that the supply of water to the Wooroloo Sanatorium had been restricted during the regime of the last Government. I believe that is so. Whether it has been reinstated I cannot say, but I will make inquiries. I will go further and say that there must be some very definite and serious reason why it should not be reinstated. The member for Avon read an extract from the report of the Commissioner of Health with regard to the Wooroloo Sanatorium and the opinions expressed by Dr. Mitchell. I have known Dr. Mitchell for many years and have had the opportunity of discussing this matter with other medical men controlling similar institutions in the Eastern States. They all express the same opinion, namely, that it is almost suicidal to permit a man suffering from T.B. to remain idle when he is capable of doing some work. The argument is that if you allow such a man to do some active work—not laborious work—it keeps his mind off his particular complaint, and he has a chance to live many years longer than a man who simply does nothing and gives way.

Mr. Griffiths: Dry rot sets in there.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Yes. I agree with the member for Toodyay that these men could not have a more healthful occupation than that of growing flowers. Flowers grow exceptionally well around the Wooroloo Sanatorium. The effect of such work is not only beneficial to the patients cultivating the gardens, but is

stimulating and pleasing to the patients who are unable to do any work at all. It is scandalous that water cannot be supplied to allow these unfortunate people to carry on work of this nature.

Mr. Thorn: I do not think the water is cut off.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: The supply was restricted. It may have been reinstated, but I will certainly make inquiries now the matter has been brought under my notice. I agree with the hon. member that we should endeavour to make the Woorloo Sanatorium self-supporting. The member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. McLarty) asked if it were possible to provide a schedule of uniform charges for patients at committee hospitals. I can easily suggest that to those controlling committee hospitals, but it could not be applied to the North-West.

Mr. Latham: Or to those in the outer goldfields districts.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: The charges at some of the goldfields hospitals are cheaper than those at many country hospitals.

Mr. Latham: The former must be costly to run.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: But the charge per day is less there than at many of the hospitals in the agricultural areas. I think the suggestion is worthy of consideration, and I shall go into the matter because I think it would be a step in the right direction. Then again, the member for Murray-Wellington inquired what was the policy of the Government with reference to the establishment of hospitals in different districts, and he inquired how far apart we thought they should be. I can give a definite reply to his queries. Unless the hospital is already in existence, no new hospital will receive any subsidy from the Government if it is established at a distance less than 30 miles from an existing hospital. I do not say that we would refuse to pay the subsidy if it were a mile or two within that distance, but, generally speaking, the policy of the Government is not to subsidise the erection of hospitals at distances less than 30 miles from institutions already established.

Mr. Stubbs: Some are altogether too close now.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: From one agricultural district, an application for assistance was received when I was Minister for Health in the previous Labour Government. I refused point blank to assist either regarding the building of the hospital or its subsidy. Those concerned went on with the proposition, and are maintaining the hospital to-day. More power to them for doing so, but they are not getting a penny from the Government. In our opinion, the establishment of that hospital was quite unnecessary. It was provided at a centre eight miles away from an established hospital in one direction and 12 miles from one in another direction. The State cannot afford to pay either a building subsidy or a general subsidy where hospitals are situated in such close proximity. I know the difficulties that confront the member for Roebourne (Mr. Rodoreda) regarding both dental and medical treatment of the children at schools in his constituency. Since the inception of the scheme, no medical or dental examination of the children in the North has been carried out.

Mr. Latham: Dr. Stang went North last year.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Was that for the purposes of a medical examination of the children?

Mr. Latham: Yes, and arrangements were made with private doctors, so that I believe every school was visited for the first time last year.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I am pleased to hear that. I do not know that anything has been done regarding the dental inspection of the children in the North-West schools.

Mr. Latham: No, I do not think so.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Some arrangement may be possible by which the medical men in the North can examine the children dentally, but taking everything into consideration—I do not desire to be harsh on anyone—from what I know of the position in the North, I am not too enamoured of the suggestion to ask the doctors there to treat the children dentally.

Mr. Rodoreda: They could at least carry out extractions.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Perhaps. There are one or two medical men in the North I would not engage to extract a tooth from a child of mine. Another matter mentioned by the member for

Roebourne had reference to the provision of a maternity ward at Onslow. I think I was Minister for Health when the hospital was transferred from Onslow to Beadon, and I cannot remember any request having been made for maternity accommodation. I recognise the necessity for some such provision at hospitals in the North. If Beadon is to be a place where men and women are to live, there is an absolute necessity for a maternity ward there. I will go into the matter at the earliest possible moment to ascertain whether something can be done to meet that requirement. There is one thing I am convinced of, and it is that the matrons appointed to take charge of hospitals in the North should have the double qualification—a medical and a midwifery certificate. That should be regarded as a necessity, irrespective of how qualified the medical man may be in the district where the hospital is situated. One can never tell what will happen in the far distant parts of the State, and I think the double qualification should be held by all matrons there.

Vote put and passed.

*Vote—Public Health £29,700—agreed to.*

Department of the Minister for Lands and Immigration (Hon. M. F. Troy, Minister).

*Vote—Lands and Surveys, £49,089:*

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS** (Hon. M. F. Troy—Mt. Magnet) [8.50]: Last night I listened to the Minister for Mines addressing the Committee most optimistically with regard to the mining industry. It is my great regret that I cannot follow his lead and outline an optimistic programme in speaking to the Lands Estimates.

Mr. Stubbs: Your part of it will come again all right.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS:** If I lack enthusiasm at the present juncture, I can speak with hope regarding the future, because I am convinced that when wheat prices recover, land activities and the industries with which they are associated will be as prosperous as in years past. It was not to be expected that applications for land during the last financial year would in any way approach the demand in each of the years during the decade preceding the last three years. Despite the continued low prices for primary products, the department, during the year, dealt with applications for

500,000 acres under C.P. conditions. The area applied for was slightly in excess of that recorded during the previous financial year. That is evidence that there is still great interest taken in land settlement matters in Western Australia. Pastoral lease applications numbered 70 for an area of 2,930,000 acres, being 500,000 acres less than were applied for during the previous year. The number of blocks allotted by the Land Board was 161 and the new settlers totalled 491. That is not bad when we have regard to the fact that very little inducement is offering to individuals to settle on the land in these days. Under the conditional alienation clauses of the Act, 141 applications were received for an area of 4,000 acres. With regard to pastoral leases, 75 applications were approved during the year for an area aggregating 3,206,000 acres. That is slightly in excess of the position last year. The department has continued the practice of supplying wire netting to settlers to assist them to fight the rabbit pest. Although there is a great demand for netting to-day, the department is doing its utmost, with the money at its disposal, to meet settlers' needs. During the year, 649 miles of netting and 88 tons of plain and barbed wire were supplied to 180 settlers at a cost of £3,809. Since the inception of the scheme introduced to provide farmers with wire netting, 9,618 miles of netting and 245 tons of wire have been supplied to 2,407 settlers, at a total cost of £441,000. The difficulty of the times has been reflected in the lower demand during the past three years, but increased ravages of the rabbit pest have forced many farmers to turn to the department for assistance this year. A heavy increase in applications is noticed in certain months of the year, and the Government have doubled the expenditure for the year. Heavy deliveries did not take place until the 30th June, and increased activity will be shown in the figures for the ensuing year. Wire netting was supplied to farmers under an agreement with the Commonwealth Government, and that agreement expired on the 30th June last. The maximum amount available to the State for that purpose was £101,157 per annum for six years, making a total during the currency of the agreement of £606,000. As applications slumped with the beginning of the depression, it has not been found necessary to draw the full amount of that allowance. The total drawn to date amounts to £429,000. I do not

know whether the department is entitled to draw the balance, inasmuch as the agreement has now expired, but that matter will be taken up with the Commonwealth Government not only in the hope that we may be able to draw the balance but that we may be able to provide funds for the future, and so help farmers to make their properties thoroughly secure. Regarding the wire netting supplied, some doubt was raised, particularly by the member for Pingelly (Mr. Seward), about the effectiveness of the 1½-inch mesh. He was of opinion, and some settlers along the Midland line have written to me in the same strain, that the 1½-inch mesh was not sufficiently close to prevent baby rabbits from getting into the crops. I am not acquainted with the position, but throughout Australia, so far as I can learn, the 1½-inch mesh is usually adopted. That is the mesh we were counselled to adopt, and, so far, there has not been sufficient evidence of its lack of suitability to warrant the department in refusing to continue with it.

*[Mr. Hegney took the Chair.]*

Mr. Ferguson: There is quite a lot of evidence.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But there is more evidence that the 1½-inch mesh is suitable to deal with the rabbit pest. Wherever the settlers have taken steps to eradicate the pest, that mesh has been found satisfactory. There are thousands of cases in which that has been established. I have no doubt that some baby rabbits will get through a 1½-inch mesh.

Mr. Latham: Rabbits have been known to climb over the fences.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have known that to be done. I know that the 1½-inch mesh netting has been proved of value, and if the 1¼-inch mesh were to be introduced, I want members to realise that it will cost the settlers 21 per cent. more and it will mean that the money available will not go as far as under existing conditions. Although in this country a large number of farmers have had wire netting, I have seen ample evidence that the fences were not effective, because the gates were being left open. During the last elections I travelled over a great deal of the farming areas, and in hundreds of cases found gates open, while in innumerable instances the netting was in disrepair. There

can be no wonder expressed at rabbits invading properties suffering those defects. I was surprised that settlers who had gone to the expense of providing wire netting had taken so little pains to see that their properties were secured. On most of the properties it would require only half a day a week to ride the boundaries and look after the fences. But, as I say, in many instances I found the fences in bad repair, and the gates open.

Mr. Latham: And sometimes a gate is broken down.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Even if a gate be ill-hung, any rabbit can get under it, so we can understand that they do not always have to bother about getting through the mesh.

Mr. Seward: The farmers are only just now beginning to realise what a menace the rabbit is.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Some of these properties were fenced years ago. In the hon. member's own electorate I saw numerous fences in bad repair. And I saw the same in many other districts. Gates were left open, which of course in every instance is an invitation to the rabbit. When a man incurs the expense of rabbit-fencing his property, he should take the matter seriously, and see that his fences are kept in good order. Much of the trouble is due to the fact that settlers, after fencing their holdings, do not look after their fences. I have a great deal of evidence of that. When one sets up a rabbit-proof fence, there must be continual supervision of that fence, which involves riding it at least once a week. Only by that means can the pest be dealt with. I could have hoped that many more settlers would have been provided with wire netting, but unfortunately the financial position of many of them prevents them from getting consideration. That is not so in all cases, for the department not infrequently grants the request for netting even where the financial position of the settler is by no means satisfactory. That is done with the desire to help the settler. But it must be realised that the State Government have to find the money for the Federal Government, and so it is impossible for the State Government to be providing netting for farmers who do not pay. So far as we can, we have regard to the financial position of a settler, but as I have said netting is given to many settlers

whose financial position is unsatisfactory, in the hope that it will help them out of their difficulty. Unfortunately, the view is held by many settlers that they should get all they can from the State, after which the State is to be the last to be paid. Even if the settlers cannot pay land rent—and many of them cannot—I hope they will meet these obligations for which the State is responsible to the Commonwealth. The rent position is by no means satisfactory. It could not be satisfactory in the present depressed condition of the agricultural and pastoral industries. It is becoming more unsatisfactory year by year, but I hope the recent advance in wool prices will enable us to collect some rent from people holding the land. The rent position, and its relation to re-purchased estates at the 30th June last, was as follows:—On ordinary locations purchased under the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act, the amount outstanding was £88,527; under the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act, arrears owing by returned soldiers amounted to £129,363, and for other repurchased estates it was £1,446, or a total amount of arrears on re-purchased estates of £222,336. That is a very big sum when we remember that none of the land was sold at a high price as compared with land in the Eastern States. Those lands were purchased prior to the low market prices, and many of the settlers took possession of the land and had the advantage of good prices for years. The revenue collected for the year 1933 was £206,857, or a decrease of £31,805 as against last year, while the aggregate arrears of land rent, exclusive of re-purchased estates, amounts to no less a sum than £489,000, which, with the arrears on re-purchased estates, totals about £700,000.

Mr. Stubbs: They are all overdue?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They are the arrears of land rent. Mr. Baxter, speaking in another place on the Financial Emergency Tax Bill, said the conditions were now much better, and that the Government were getting more revenue. That was an absolutely incorrect statement. In departmental matters the Government are getting considerably less revenue than before, and I take this opportunity to correct Mr. Baxter's statement, for both in respect of land rents and Agricultural Bank interest, the revenue is seriously declining. The

arrears this year are £92,000 in excess of those of last year, so in that respect the State has gone back very badly. There is not much to say in regard to migration, so I will not say anything more about it, as immigration is largely at an end. I may tell members that provision has been made to continue the wheat carting subsidy this year, and I have notified that to members representing constituencies where the subsidy has been in operation.

Mr. Stubbs: Is it to be on the same basis as last year?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I think so. Almost the same amount of money is to be provided, but if a lesser quantity is carted, the expenditure will not be so great. Last year £17,000 was provided, and this year the vote is £16,000. The subsidy was granted to settlers situated at from 20 to 50 miles from existing railways in the area known as the 3,500 farms scheme. The subsidy was at the rate of 9d. per ton per mile from the farm to 15 miles radius from the nearest siding, the number of settlers receiving the subsidy being 331. Quite a number of town lots have been offered for sale during the last 12 months, and particularly on the gold fields has the response been very satisfactory. In all, 696 town and suburban lots were submitted to auction, and they realised £14,658, or £2,282 in excess of upset prices. There has been a steady demand for lots in Kalgoorlie, Boulder, Leonora and Wiluna. Some of the lots at Kalgoorlie realised from £50 to £70 each, and 101 blocks at Wiluna realised £2,190. That is very satisfactory. The survey department is not very active, unfortunately, because there is not the demand for land that there was. However, subdivisions are still being made. The subdivision of 259 blocks was carried out south-west of Gingin. I have not seen this land, but I think the Leader of the Opposition put the work in hand.

Mr. Latham: It is not much good.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I gave instructions that no more was to be done until I had seen it. Forty blocks were subdivided west of Mount Barker. A small scheme of sub-division was carried out at Carnarvon, where land was made available for banana growing. An area of 426,000 acres was classified be-

tween the Scott and the Blackwood Rivers. The department initiated a scheme at Herdsman's Lake, which, I regret to say, is not very satisfactory, as the Leader of the Opposition knows, for his Government were responsible. I take no exception to that, but the production on the lake has been a very great disappointment, and the position is being more closely investigated.

Mr. Latham: It is very slow. It has to take its time.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In regard to the lots on which the State had erected houses, the settlers on which are mostly in arrears with their rent, it was decided to capitalise all the arrears to the 31st March last, and to charge the settlers house rent only for a period of three years. The result was disappointing. The majority of the settlers immediately began to fall into arrears in their payments for the houses, and the position to-day is very unsatisfactory. I met the settlers and told them they should not fall behind in respect of their house rent, that they must have regard to the fact that the State had provided them with houses, and that their obligation was to pay house rent at least; otherwise it would have to be paid by taxpayers in an even less fortunate position.

Mr. Latham: They are holding their blocks under very liberal terms.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Very liberal terms indeed. Where the settlers cannot meet the house rent, of course, we cannot collect, but there is oftentimes a tendency on the part of people who are tenants of the State to take advantage of that. I hope the settlers there will at least pay the house rent, even if we have to release them for some years from paying for their blocks. I know the settlers are not getting the production they expected. There is something wrong there. The estate has been a very great disappointment, and the land does not grow the produce as well as similar land will.

Mr. Stubbs: It has not been sweetened properly. It will take a long time.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am afraid some of the land there is not too good. Still portion of it is quite all right. A few of the settlers have no water for irrigation in the summer time, and they cannot produce at the time when it should be possible to produce something. When there is warmth, they lack the mois-

ture. It was decided during the year to review the prices of all holdings infested with poison. In the case of double-priced blocks in respect of which the settler was required to eradicate the poison previous to obtaining the benefit of the low prices, it was decided that the lower prices should operate even though the poison had not been eradicated, but it is of course provided that the settler shall eradicate the poison previous to the issue of the Crown grant. I do not wish this to be regarded as a general invitation to all people to come along merely because they have some poison on their properties and ask to have them revalued. There is a tendency for people to avail themselves of any pretext to have their properties revalued. Land in Western Australia is very cheap. During the first five years no rent is paid and the rent is spread over the next 25 years. If the amount is divided by the 30 years over which the payments are actually spread, the annual payment is very small indeed. I recently read a letter from a settler who was paying 4s. 6d. for his land and who had 30 years in which to pay for it, and who spoke of the State Shylock. He said the road board had valued his property at 4s. per acre and had based the annual rate on that valuation. Of course the settler had never considered the matter. He pays more in road board rates than he does to secure the freehold of the land. Our land is very cheap indeed; in fact, when the Migration and Development Commission were interesting themselves in our country, it was represented to me that I ought to increase the price of our land. I was told that we were really giving the land away and that we ought to increase the price in order to give back to the people something for the money expended on railways, roads and water supplies. I refused to entertain the idea. Settlers are now getting out into the more difficult country where the rainfall is lower and where the freights are high, and I said I did not propose to increase the price at that stage. The price might have been increased 20 years ago, or even 10 years ago, but it cannot be increased now. It is not the price of land that is causing the difficulties in these days—in fact many settlers are not paying their rent—it is something beyond the price of the land that is causing the disadvantages. It is the cost of other things and the need of a payable

market. A great many people take the view that it is easier to get something from the State than from anyone else, and therefore they demand it from the State. The land has some value and we are entitled to get something for it. In the course of a few years the land will be paid up and we shall then have no revenue from that source. Some members may argue that the land is not worth anything until it is improved, but still it is worth something. We sell land from 1s. up to an average of 8s. per acre, and selectors have 30 years in which to pay, and the payment works out at a very small amount annually. The Leader of the Opposition, when Minister for Lands, took up the question of alkali in land. I propose to give consideration to settlers whose land has been affected by alkali to an extent. I do not propose for one moment to give relief simply because alkali has appeared here and there in small patches of country, and I do not propose to put the State to the expense of investigating people's holdings. Some people who have held their land for 20 or 25 years are complaining of the presence of alkali.

[*Mr. Sleeman took the Chair.*]

Mr. Stubbs: The question of alkali has been overdone.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: And in these days particularly, it will be overdone. There is no place in Western Australia where alkali does not appear. It has appeared all over the State, and now people are approaching the department and wishing to put us to great expense to send out officials to test the country. I know of very little country in our wheat belt that is not affected. Old-settled districts are affected. I have provided that wherever a definite proportion, say 10 per cent.—that is 100 acres in 1,000 acres—has been rendered valueless by alkali, the department will be prepared to consider the question of revaluation. Then, if the settler makes application, he must pay the fee for inspection. It would be impossible to keep down the expenses of the department if I agreed to comply with all the demands for inspections, not because of any real grievance but to wring further concessions from the Government. There must be a very definite acreage affected by alkali before an application will be considered. The older settlers

have made their land freehold and we are not going to make refunds at this stage, after they have had their land all those years and obtained good results from it. Members sitting opposite have properties affected by alkali. My property is affected, but from that property I have had excellent crops for years. I am upset about it, but the land owes me nothing. Unless the farm is injured materially, I shall make no demand on the Government for a refund. I have no desire to set myself up as an example, but if a man has been taking big crops off a bit of country for years and years, he ought not to be asking for a refund or embarrassing the Government by demanding the repayment of money paid, or for the services of officers necessary to make an inspection.

Mr. Griffiths: There are sections of country like Lake Brown and Champion that are badly affected.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. We are having the whole of the Esperance area classified to ascertain the position. While I have respect for Dr. Teakle's scientific attainments, I am not going to bank on him. I think it was a mistake on his part to start condemning the country wholesale. If he had come here 20 years ago and made his reports, very little of our country would have been settled. Except in the Esperance area his investigation has been without plan or method; it has been directed to country north, east and south, even to country in the South-West.

Mr. Ferguson: Has he condemned any land in the South-West?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have a file in my department showing that he was not giving his time to making a thorough investigation, but was visiting all parts of the country—in the north one week, in the east another week and in the south another week. He was not doing the work in a progressive and definite manner, but was expending his energy on examinations that could not possibly have material results. Consequently, I have arranged that he must confine his attention to the Esperance area, and get that examination completed before embarking on another plan of operations.

Mr. Moloney: He is making a good job of it, too.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I hope he is.

Mr. Seward: In what way?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We cannot pay a man to flit about the country here, there and everywhere. His work must be arranged on some definite basis. I do not wish to criticise that officer. He is a young man of attainments and a conscientious man, but I shall not bank on what he says. I am not going to condemn the whole of the country because he condemns it.

Mr. Ferguson: He has not condemned the whole of the country.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, but he has condemned far too much of it, and furthermore he has been responsible for putting into the minds of people a feeling of discouragement about their land. When salt appears on the land, we know the reason for it. Every man who owns property knows the reason for the appearance of salt. The reason is the removal of the timber, but he cannot correct it because it is too late. While I have regard for Dr. Teakle's attainments, I think it would be a bad policy to accept this young man's opinion as the last word on the land of Western Australia.

Mr. Moloney: Is it not better to tell the people the truth about the land—that it is no good?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Dr. Teakle is telling the truth as far as he knows it.

Mr. Seward: It has to be proved that the land is no good.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: So far as he knows the truth, he tells it, but no one man can say absolutely.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The other side of the picture is that you are wasting capital on quite a lot of land that should not be settled.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We are not doing that. We are settling no new land. We are examining the land already settled in the Esperance area. That is where Dr. Teakle should be located, and that is where he should complete his examination. But he has been examining land that has been held for 20 or 25 years, and from which settlers have taken good crops year after year. Such action is having no good result; it is merely bringing demands for refunds from the department. It costs the department money for his activities, and his activities bring trouble to the department in demands for the revaluation of properties held for years. There must be an end to that sort of thing. What right

have I to ask for a refund on land held for 30 years, though good crops have been taken from it?

Mr. Griffiths: Land from which every stick of timber has been cleared.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, but I do not clear such land now; I am letting it revert to its former state. I do not feel that I should ask the Government to make a refund because I have had the advantage of that land and still have the advantage of it.

Mr. Seward: I should not think the Government would grant a refund.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: One might as well ask for a refund when, after having cleared all the timber, the land starts to shift with the winds and the fields are made sterile because the soil is blown away. No one would ask the Government for a refund under those conditions. Settlers must be fair to the country. The average price of land is 8s. per acre and settlers have 30 years in which to pay it, the first five years being free of rent. If the land is not given away, it certainly is not dear. I hope my remarks will not be regarded as a condemnation of Dr. Teakle. I regard him as an earnest and capable man, but I refuse to accept his word as the last word on the quality of our land. Other people have the practical experience and the land is adaptable. I remember that on one occasion the Director of Agriculture visited my farm. It was in October and I showed him my crop in ear. Mr. Sutton said, "You will get nothing from it." I did not dispute the point with him, but I knew he was wrong. I got eight bags per acre from that crop. I did not blame Mr. Sutton; the explanation was that he did not know the land, whereas I did. I knew that it had a clay subsoil that retained the moisture. I knew that from experience; he merely judged the land from his experience of other types of country. I do not say he was wrong; on his experience he was right, but he had not the knowledge of the soil content that I had.

Mr. Stubbs: There is a lot in what you say.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Dr. Teakle said there was no alkali on my place, and that the condition was due to seepage. It is all due to seepage.

Mr. Ferguson: Not in the Esperance area. That is an entirely different proposition.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In the first two or three years they obtained crops.

Mr. Ferguson: It all depends on the rainfall.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Everything depends on that. After that the alkali appears, because it is in that country. It is largely all seepage. The seepage brings the salt to the surface. Alkali has appeared in most parts of the State, because the timber has been cleared off and the water level has risen. Previously the timber drank up the moisture in the ground. In the absence of timber, the water level has risen, and fallowing operations have also tended to conserve moisture in the ground. There are places where on a shaft being sunk, salt water was obtained at 12ft. or 14ft., but to-day in the same place it is obtained at 8ft. Some lands naturally contain more salt than others.

Mr. Stubbs: That is so in every district.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Members know that in their own electorates there is land they would not touch. Such areas grow tremendous crops for a few years, and then become salt. There will be no re-valuation of land that is affected with alkali, unless some definite area has been rendered of no value for producing crops. There will be no inspections unless an inspection fee is paid. That is reasonable. But for such a decision the department would be inundated with applications for revaluation of lands on the slightest pretext.

Mr. Ferguson: Will that apply in the case of land which Dr. Teakle says contains too much alkali to be worked?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: His report deals with low alkali and high alkali content. A low alkali content is suitable for crops, but a high one is not. I have never yet seen a report which does not contain some reference to alkali, but the low content is not detrimental to the soil.

Mr. Ferguson: Do you want the settler who applies for a revaluation to pay for a report that has already been made? Will you want another inspection in that case?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am not prepared to take Dr. Teakle as the last word on the subject.

Mr. Ferguson: Whose verdict would you accept?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I would be guided by the experience of the country.

Mr. Ferguson: Where would you get that experience?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: From the settlers, and other people who know what the production of the land has been.

Mr. Ferguson: If the settler applies for a revaluation, how will he get a proper report upon his land?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The inspectors of the Agricultural Bank know what the country will do from the crops that have come off it. They have a wider experience than Dr. Teakle. I am not going to accept him as the final arbiter.

Mr. Ferguson: He is a recognised authority on that problem now.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Who recognises him as the authority?

Mr. Ferguson: He has had a wider experience than any man in this country.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He was trained in the United States. Who accepts him as the authority, other than Ministers who have succumbed to his theories? He has been taken up by one man and put upon a pedestal. He is only a youth as yet.

Mr. Moloney: We must avail ourselves of science.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes.

Mr. Moloney: We do not want to follow a rule of thumb method.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If it is proved to be correct science, we must accept it.

Mr. Ferguson: He has made a special study of this problem.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There is such a thing also as practical knowledge.

Mr. Tonkin: The two must go hand in hand.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The scientist lays down a principle to be followed in one year, and ten years hence it is no longer the same principle.

Mr. Moloney: Theory and practice must work together.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Scientists are always altering their ground: they are always finding new principles. We are asked to accept this officer's word as the last thing in the country, to bow down and worship his opinion.

Mr. Seward: He has given you definite percentages of salinity.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: What we want to know is what the country will grow, and how our lands can best be utilised. That is the work upon which he should be employed.

Mr. Ferguson: He can tell you where a crop of wheat will grow when the salt percentage is so much, and what the salinity in an average rainfall season will be. He is the greatest authority in the country on that problem.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: What authorities are there in this country on any problem?

Mr. Ferguson: We have plenty of practical farmers.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We have. Most of the authorities are text-book authorities. They are often wrong, and many of them are groping in the dark. I will not accept this officer's opinion as the last word on soil content. I am not disparaging his knowledge or his attainments. The previous Administration entered upon certain special settlements of which I know very little. I have not seen the settlements at Nornalup and Nannup, but hope to do so very shortly. They are entering upon a stage when expenditure is growing. I have nothing to say about the ventures, and I hope they will work out as anticipated by the Minister who put them in hand. I trust we shall get through with them on a cheaper basis than has been done in other cases. I understand the settler has done his work, but I suppose he will discover difficulties that were not known to exist in the beginning. I hope to see these settlements during the recess. One settlement is likely to cause the Government some embarrassment. I refer to the re-settlement of group selections that were abandoned owing to reconstruction. A large number of these were abandoned when the group areas were reconstructed, as not being of a nature to maintain a man and his family. When the previous Government put settlers upon those areas I opposed it in this House. It was not the sort of settlement that would be successful. I felt that we had had experience of these lands and having had it we ought to cut our loss and retire from the field.

Mr. Stubbs: Are there many of them?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. No one in this Chamber to-day is responsible for that. There were 47 abandoned holdings that were made available for selection by the

unemployed, in the Busselton area. On these 47 holdings there was expended during the group settlement era no less than £78,000. The holdings were re-assessed and made available for selection. The new assessment was at £18,000. On one location there had been expended £1,424, but the re-assessed value for re-selection was £350. That was the price of the house, and some small improvements such as dairy sheds, etc. On another location £1,763 had been expended, and the assessed value for re-selection was also £350. The total expenditure on the 47 holdings was £78,400 odd, and the re-assessed value was £18,790.

Mr. Stubbs: Have they been taken up?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Not all of them. I would have had no objection had they been made available on the lines adopted on the Peel Estate. The person who took up a block should have been prepared to take his chance seeing that the State had expended so much money, had cut its loss, and made the land available at a low figure. On each holding the State had spent over a thousand pounds and this was made available to the settler for a few hundred pounds. He should then have been prepared to make the best he could of it. The previous Government put new settlers upon these holdings and made advances to them of nearly £9,000. The settlers are getting £2 a week. I would not object to that, but I do not think there is any possibility that they can maintain themselves. That is where my perplexity comes in. What are we to do with them? Are we to continue paying them £2 a week for good, keeping them on a property that runs a few cows and pigs, and retire them on a pension, or are we to put them off their holdings? I thought we had done with that, had spent our money and cut our loss, but the settlers have been put back again. They are now telling me they were promised they would be supplied with stock and equipment. Many of the settlers have received advances equal to the valuation of their holdings. Thus the expenditure has grown up again. I do not know where it will stop. The assessed value of one property was £400. I do not know that the settler has paid anything upon it, but up to June last a sum of £214 had been advanced to him. The value of another property was assessed at £275, and the settler has been advanced £245. In another case the assessment is £210 and £191 has

been advanced. Half of the 47 settlers have left, although they were getting £2 a week. The remainder are now telling me that they want some information regarding their future. They say that when they took over these blocks two and a half years ago they were informed that as soon as they had the necessary feed, stock and implements would be supplied to them. They claim that they now have the necessary feed and require stock. I can find no promise that they would be supplied with stock and equipment. The conditions of settlement are set out on the file. Paragraph 12 says that selected men, subject to satisfactory work and conduct, will be entitled to the land as a homestead block, and will have any time up to five years to pay the necessary fees and secure occupation, and that they may apply to the bank for a loan, but the trustees are to be the sole judges as to the granting or otherwise of such loan.

Mr. Stubbs: When was that put on the file?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In 1931. Now the Agricultural Bank say they will not grant a loan. Mr. McLarty wrote only last month stating that, as a general policy, the trustees had decided some time ago that it would be inadvisable for the bank to make further advances on abandoned holdings that had since been taken up, as the bank considered that the assessed value of the blocks represented their full value for mortgage purposes. What are we to do? Really, I do not want to do the men an injury, but I do not want to continue a policy which will end nowhere and run into thousands of pounds, while we shall still have the settler as a pensioner.

Mr. F. C. L. Smith: Would it not be possible to give the settlers six or seven cows and put them on their own?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They will not stay on their own.

Mr. Tonkin: You could make it definite that they should.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Why torture the cows?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: These people will not stay on their own.

Mr. Brockman: Where are these men?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: At South Busselton, on abandoned blocks. One settler has land valued at £300. The State had expended on it £1,702, but it was re-valued at

£300. That settler got an advance of £182. Another settler, with property assessed at £400, got an advance of £130. Still another settler, with property assessed at £425, received £111. These settlers have again abandoned the locations.

Mr. Doney: But are there not additional improvements representing that money?

Mr. Stubbs: They are abandoned blocks.

Mr. Doney: But that would not stop the work from being done. Are there improvements representing the extra amounts since advanced?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I suppose something was done, but the Agricultural Bank state definitely that the blocks only represent the valuation put on them. The bank refuse to take them over, even with the additional improvements. The bank state that the assessed value is the top value.

Mr. F. C. L. Smith: They must have been making improvements with their £2 per week.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I should say they must have been. Two of the most capable men in the State inspected these blocks. They were Messrs. Forrest and Carter, and they both unhesitatingly and emphatically condemned them.

Mr. F. C. L. Smith: Then was it not bad policy on the part of the bank to deal with them?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Of course it was. My desire is to help the settler out, but what am I to do? Must I abandon him, or must he be assisted indefinitely? The member for Sussex (Mr. Brockman) was very much concerned about the matter and I must inform members that I am very perplexed as to what I am to do about it.

Mr. Stubbs: Is not the Royal Commission now sitting inquiring into the matter?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Royal Commission that reported on these blocks condemned them. Mr. Carter and Mr. Forrest after examination condemned them.

Mr. Brockman: They are both capable men.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. Both those men make their living in the district. Mr. Carter investigated all that country, and his remarks are on the files. I would rather transfer these settlers to standard blocks. We have standard group blocks

available. I do not feel like going on with country that we have proved will not give results. It would be engaging upon another group settlement scheme.

Mr. Brockman: Why have the Agricultural Bank been spending further money on these blocks?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They have not.

Mr. Latham: The unemployed were put down there; you know that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The bank did not do it.

Mr. Doney: Then the additional amounts that were expended were from unemployment moneys; they were not Agricultural Bank funds?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No.

Mr. Doney: I understood they were.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No. The bank refused to take them over. One of the conditions of settlement was that the bank would take over the securities, but that depended upon whether the trustees were willing to do so. The trustees are not willing. The Leader of the Opposition is not in the slightest degree responsible, because this is a scheme put in hand by a gentleman who is not now in the House. I would like to say a few words with regard to the Agricultural Bank. During the year there was expended by the Agricultural Bank on account of the Industries Assistance Board, the group settlement scheme and bank advances the sum of £89,000 to assist the settlers. No new business was undertaken during the year, advances being confined to existing clients in order to assist them to carry on owing to the prevailing low prices of primary products. The advances were made in respect of 1,540 applications, and the sum of £25,900 was earmarked for sustenance. In addition, the bank refunded over £100,000, mostly received on account of interest. It cannot be said, therefore, that the bank have been ungenerous in their transactions. In addition to the assistance I have mentioned, approval was given for payment of £34,872 from the Commonwealth grant provided for assistance to wheat-growers. The total amount paid on account of the wheat bounty, at 2s. 2d. per acre, amounted to £389,897. The present position of the bank clients with

respect to principal and interest is as follows:—

	Ordinary clients.	Soldiers.
Principal .. ..	5,331,615	4,374,063
Interest outstanding ..	976,322	754,570
Interest collected for year ending 30-6-1933	173,855	121,442

As I have already said, £100,000 was handed back to the settlers to enable them to carry on. Under the Industries Assistance Act, the only new business is the addition of 85 clients in the Southern Cross Miners' Settlement Scheme. To the 30th June the number of accounts was 1,425, of which 463 have not yet been funded owing to various causes. The present position with regard to the Industries Assistance Board is that the principal outstanding amounts to £1,582,160 and interest to £301,520. Hon. members will note that the arrears of Bank interest amount to nearly £2,000,000.

Mr. Stubbs: Is that overdue interest?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes.

Mr. Brockman: How much is owing by group settlers?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not know. That is the total. The total number of properties in possession is 1,215. These carry a principal debt of £1,208,512, and an interest debt of £386,848. Out of the 1,215 farms in possession, 227 carry a debt to the Industries Assistance Board of £356,000. During the year, 320 properties were sold, the sale value being £364,508. In addition, 160 properties were leased for cropping and 86 properties are being fallowed under leasing arrangements for future cropping.

Mr. Stubbs: Is this sum of £300,000, which you just mentioned was owing for interest, included in the £2,000,000, or is it in addition?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is included in the £2,000,000. The Loan Estimates will be brought down very soon now, and it is anticipated that owing to the shortage of interest collections and the necessity for keeping the existing farms worked, £409,000 will be required by the bank and £101,000 by the Industries Assistance Board. So, unfortunately, this represents the condition of the industry at present, but I am hopeful that, in the course of a few years, we shall be able to regard our difficulties as past.

Mr. Latham: The industry will come back.

Mr. J. H. Smith: We will regard these days as a nightmare.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If the industry does not recover, I do not know what will save Western Australia. I am sure the industry will again be prosperous, and that we will emerge from our present day difficulties. The prospects at present are not bright. With regard to wheat, I am sure that some of the countries will cease producing that commodity, and I am hopeful that within the next few years we shall again enjoy good prices. I live in that expectation, and I entertain the strongest hope that we will not be disappointed.

Mr. Brockman: It will be a poor lookout if we are.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: As members know, the Agricultural Bank is now the subject of an inquiry by a Royal Commission. The Commission will not report this year, because members of that body have a heavy task to undertake. I do not know what their report will be, but when it is received, Parliament will have to take it into consideration. They will be asked to review the whole position, and I hope that when that is done, members will not be influenced by prejudices, but will face the position in the interests of the State. The House should have confidence in the members of the Royal Commission. They are well known men of responsibility and character. The chairman, Mr. Hale, is not well known to me; he is known better to members of the Opposition. Likewise, Mr. Diamond is not well-known to me, but Mr. Donovan is. I can assure the House that those three gentlemen were selected because of their undoubted integrity, ability and knowledge. Those were the only factors that governed their appointment. There was no other consideration weighing with me or the Government, except to get the best results. As I have already pointed out, the outlook regarding wheat is not satisfactory, but who knows what the next week may bring forth? What will be forthcoming from the Commonwealth Government? We may get something of advantage from them.

Mr. Latham: We want something more stable than the latest proposal.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not really expect anything more stable just

now, or until the world position is rectified. Until then, I do not think we can expect anything more stable. It appears to me that wheat should be produced in Western Australia as cheaply, if not more cheaply than in any other country in the world. Perhaps some other members have a greater knowledge of the position than I possess, and know other countries of the world as I do not, but having regard to our equable climate and the wonderful succession of good seasons that we enjoy, it seems to me reasonable to assert that Western Australia is in a better position to produce wheat than many other countries. It is surprising to think that we have not experienced a bad season since 1914 and that, from Ajania in the north to Esperance in the south, we can produce wheat crops every year. That is an amazing thing that cannot be done elsewhere in Australia. Our land is cheap, and the facilities we provide are such that the conditions here are unequalled in any other part of the world. Our trouble is that we embarked in the industry too late in its period of prosperity. It was developed towards the close of the good years when the prices were high, and those prices dropped before many of our farmers were able to make the most of their opportunities. In any event Western Australia should be able to stand up against the difficulties of the present as well as any other country in the world, and no doubt we shall do so.

Mr. Stubbs: Would a guarantee of 3s. a bushel be an incentive to farmers to continue growing wheat?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If we could get that guarantee, the great majority of the farmers would be quite satisfied, even though some time ago they said they could not make the industry pay at 5s. a bushel. But it is obvious that if they could be guaranteed 3s. a bushel, they would look upon that return as something in the nature of the millenium. I am sure that some of the countries now growing wheat will go out of that form of production. With all the talk, and the need for restricting acreages, I am sure that one day the industry will again revive. Let members consider the position regarding wool. Who would have thought two years ago that wool would have commanded the price that obtains this year? Who would have thought that gold would bring £8 an ounce? No one in his wildest dreams would have imagined such a price

for gold. And so I think good prices for wheat will again be enjoyed. Unquestionably, at present we have to do everything possible to carry the industry on. The outlook for wool is bright at present, but what the future will hold, we do not know, because world conditions are so disturbed.

Mr. Latham: I hope the outlook will continue bright until after the next sale.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I sincerely hope it will last throughout the season. If it does, it will mean bringing a lot of money into Western Australia, and every penny of it will be spent in the country. People who are on the land and receive money, do not keep it. If a farmer has £100 to come to him on account of his crop, he spends it. Before he receives it, he has made his plans for spending it. To-day there is the suggestion that in any plan of reconstruction for agricultural development, we should reduce our wheat production to a certain extent and go in for mixed farming. Hon. members know that I have always advocated that in this Chamber. I regard mixed farming as the salvation of the agricultural industry. I never enthused about the machinery farmer, the man who declared he would not even keep a cow or a horse on his property. Personally, I would rather lose a few pounds through keeping stock than do without them. If by using machinery I could save money, I would not do it at the expense of my stock. I do not regard farming as a vocation in which machinery should play the most important part. I regard real farming as being practised by the man who produces everything possible from his property. So I have always advocated that farmers should go in for other forms of production. Therefore, I support the agitation now that in any policy of reconstruction for the industry, a certain amount of money should be raised to enable farmers in the wheat belt who do not carry stock, to go in for that form of development. But before they are encouraged to procure stock, they should be provided with fencing and adequate water supplies.

Opposition Members: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I hope that when water supplies are provided on farms, they will not be 1,000-yd. or 2,000-yd. dams, but will be dams capable of holding, when full two years' supply of water. With the larger supply, farmers will have suffi-

cient water on their properties to carry them on for several years. During the heavy rains this year, I saw thousands of millions of gallons of water running to waste past farms, whereas if some of that water had been conserved, it would have carried on the farmers' stock for years.

Mr. Latham: That is what we ought to do.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is a practical policy of reconstruction. Undoubtedly, we should help our settlers to go in for mixed farming by providing fencing and adequate water supply. When we have done that, all our eggs will not be in one basket. Farmers will then be able to make more money by the sale of cows, steers, calves, wheat, oats, poultry, eggs, etc. Only by that means, can we work out the salvation of the agricultural industry of Western Australia. In any such policy of reconstruction, the work could not be done by the State alone. The Commonwealth Government would be well advised to enter into the scheme. It is just as much to their advantage as to our own to have the farmers properly and securely established on their properties. That must be done. The Leader of the Opposition, before he left office as Minister for Lands, had some figures compiled showing the average wheat production for Western Australia. He knows, as I know, that a great many of our farmers even with wheat at 6s. a bushel, could not make a living.

Mr. Latham: That is so.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Some have not the capacity or their properties are not sufficiently productive; some of them are not farming their properties effectively. Members will not be surprised to learn that of the 9,000 wheat farmers in this State 2,428 are producing less than nine bushels to the acre. With wheat at 5s. a bushel those farmers could not make their properties pay. That position will have to be faced. Two things must happen. The inefficient man will ultimately have to go out of the industry, because the inefficient cannot be carried on indefinitely by the State. If we can repair his inefficiency, it will be all right. If we cannot, that type of settler cannot remain the weak link in the industry. There will probably be openings for such a man elsewhere. He cannot be maintained on his holding if he does not do better than he has done in the past. But

the efficient man must be helped to turn over to other commodities

Mr. Seward: Probably that includes some Great Southern returns. Down the Great Southern the average is only 8 bushels or 9 bushels, the country being unsuited to wheat.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But in the northern areas, where there are 4,730 farmers, over 1,000 of them are producing less than nine bushels per acre.

Mr. Seward: But they would be mixed farming.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Not altogether. Even if they were, it would not alter the situation.

Mr. Latham: They ought to be growing oats and sheep.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. And we may have to amalgamate properties in order that they might have sufficient acreage to carry stock. That is evidence that a great many farmers in this country could not have made wheat-growing pay, even at 6s. per bushel. Numbers of farmers in good times, when they were getting an average of 5s. for their wheat, got further into debt. If we have to face a policy of reconstruction in this country, we shall have to take steps in Parliament to put people on a sound basis, helping the men of capacity and industry; but we cannot help the man who has not capacity and industry. I do not propose to say any more on the subject. I will be prepared to discuss the operations of the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Board when the amending Bill is introduced, in a few weeks' time. I will then give details of the administration of that board.

Progress reported.

### BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

- 1, Yuna-Dartmoor Railway.
  - 2, Southern Cross Southwards Railway.
- Without amendment.

*House adjourned at 10.15 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Tuesday, 7th November, 1933.*

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

### BILL—ENTERTAINMENTS TAX ACT AMENDMENT.

#### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 2nd November.

HON. L. B. BOLTON (Metropolitan) [4.34]: Previous speakers seem to have been more concerned about the promoters of picture shows than about those who will be most affected, namely the people who will have to pay the tax. It is my intention to oppose the Bill principally on the ground that the tax will operate against those people who, under the emergency legislation, have recently had their taxation doubled. Having some knowledge also of the country, I am opposing the Bill on behalf of the country people who, for a reasonably good entertainment, have often to pay an admission charge of at least 2s. 6d. to 3s. In my opinion it would be most unfair if the people of the country did not reap the benefit of this tax remission by the Federal authorities. I cannot agree with the Chief Secretary that it would be likely to have any effect on the future policy of the Federal Government if this State failed to impose the tax said to have been dropped for our benefit. I understand on good authority that there is no intention on the part of any of the other States to re-impose similar taxation. If the Federal Government are sincere in their professions about wishing to release taxation for the benefit of the States, why do not they forego something worth while, instead of a tax that will return a paltry sum of £11,000 a year? For those reasons I shall oppose the second reading.