

that it has become extensively used in the world only since some time after the Armistice. Therefore we have not yet had sufficient time to claim that these cases are cured. But we can say that the growth has gone. Whether it will come back again is another matter.

Hon. A. Lovekin: At any rate, it has cleared out.

Hon. A. J. H. SAW: The growth has disappeared, and no trace of it is left. Of course cancer cells may already have become dissipated in the deeper parts of the body, such as the liver or the lungs, where they may give rise to secondary growths. In Melbourne, besides two private practitioners having this apparatus installed, there will in a week or so be a double apparatus installed in the Melbourne hospital, capable of treating two patients at the same time. In Sydney two private practitioners, I know, have the apparatus, and according to my informant, there is a proposal to establish a central organisation where a plant, or several plants, will be installed capable of coping with the work from all the hospitals in Sydney. Now on the question of the expert who will be required to work the apparatus. No doubt, if we can get a man already skilled, so much the better. But if we cannot do that, I fail to see why a man already used to the ordinary X-ray technique should not, by study and by reading the quite full descriptions already given of this treatment, learn it just as operators have had to do in Melbourne and Sydney and other parts of the world. If that does not seem desirable, there is nothing to prevent his going to Melbourne or Sydney and acquiring the technique there; for it is the boast of the medical profession that we have no trade secrets, and that knowledge acquired by one is open to all. From what I know of the medical profession, I feel perfectly certain that those gentlemen who have already acquired experience in the Eastern States would be only too willing to place their knowledge at the disposal of any genuine seeker after the technique, who of course has already some knowledge of ordinary X-ray work. As to the cost, that entirely depends on the type of instrument which it is proposed to instal; but I do not see why the cost of working should fall entirely on the Government. There may be, and no doubt there will be, a number of patients in a position to pay for treatment. If they went to the East, they would pay for treatment there. We know that many of them are willing to go, just as the late Lord Forrest was, to the Old Country to try to obtain alleviation of their sufferings. If they are willing and able to pay, I do not see why they should not pay something towards the cost of their treatment if such an apparatus is installed in the Perth hospital.

Hon. A. Lovekin: But they should be able to get the treatment here.

Hon. A. J. H. SAW: Yes; and those who cannot pay, owing to scanty means, should be able to get their treatment free here. I desire once more to thank the House for the hearing given me.

Question put and passed.

On further motion by Hon. A. J. H. Saw, resolution transmitted to the Assembly, and their concurrence desired therein.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. J. Ewing—South-West) [9.6]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until 5.30 p.m. to-morrow.

The object is to allow hon. members a little extra time in connection with the official opening of the new General Post Office. It would be inconvenient for hon. members to attend here at 4.30.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 9.7 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 25th September, 1923.

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

QUESTION—SANDALWOOD, EXPORTS AND ROYALTY.

Mr. A. THOMSON asked the Minister for Mines: 1, How many tons of sandalwood have been exported since tenders for permit were opened on 15th September, 1923? 2, Upon how many tons has royalty been paid and what is the total amount of such royalty? 3, Is the amount of royalty paid at present £2 per ton, and is it payable by the sandalwood getter? 4, Is it a fact that prior to the closing of tenders the price, including payment of royalty by the getter, was approximately £11 per ton? 5, Is it a fact that

under tenders submitted getters would obtain a higher price than this, with the royalty being paid by the successful tenderer? 6, And that a royalty exceeding 300 per cent. above the present rate of royalty was offered? 7, Is he aware that thousands of tons are apparently being rushed to Fremantle? 8, Can he inform the House of the approximate loss to the State and the sandalwood getters separately through the highest tender not having been accepted?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, No definite records concerning the disposal of wood after it has been forwarded to Fremantle are available, but it is estimated that approximately 4,000 tons have been shipped during May, June, July, and August of the present year, and in addition considerable stocks are now held at Fremantle. 2, Royalty returns for the same period show that £7,900 have been received, which represents royalty on 3,950 tons. 3, Yes. 4, Yes. 5, Yes. 6, Yes. 7, Yes. 8, No.

QUESTION—CAUSEWAY REPAIRS.

Mr. CLYDESDALE asked the Minister for Works: 1, Is he aware of the dangerous condition of the Causeway? 2, What is the reason that repairs to same are being held up for such a lengthy period? 3, Will he give instructions for the necessary repairs to be effected immediately?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (for the Minister for Works) replied: 1, No; but it is known that repairs are urgently needed. 2, Difficulty in obtaining materials owing to the great demand in the metropolitan area. 3, Instructions have already been given, and the work is in progress.

QUESTION—PERTH-ARMADALE-ROAD.

Mr. A. THOMSON (without notice) asked the Premier: Is he aware of the disgraceful condition of the Perth-Armadale-road, and that it is at present unsafe for people to travel on? Will he take steps to have the road made reasonably safe for the travelling public?

Hon. P. Collier: That is a matter for the local governing body.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Premier can answer the question if he chooses.

The PREMIER replied: The road is under the control of the local authorities.

Mr. A. Thomson: Are you not spending Government money on it?

The PREMIER: The Government cannot be expected to keep these roads in order.

Mr. Underwood: Is it not safe to walk on?

Mr. A. Thomson: It is not even safe for that.

BILL—FIREARMS.

Second Reading—Defeated.

Debate resumed from 30th August.

Hon. F. T. BROUN (Beverley) [4.35]: I cannot see any necessity for this Bill, neither can any reasonable argument be put up in its favour.

The Minister for Mines: I hardly think you are entitled to say that.

Hon. F. T. BROUN: The Minister religiously refrained from saying very much when he moved the second reading.

Hon. P. Collier: He said a lot, but not pertinent to the Bill.

Hon. F. T. BROUN: Apparently the Government brought down the Bill because of the accidents that have occurred from time to time through pea rifles. Most of these accidents occur through carelessness on the part of those who own the gun, or of the parents of the child who uses it. No penalty that can be imposed by legislation, and no amount of license fee, can prevent these accidents occurring, or prevent people getting hold of firearms and using them in the wrong way. The Bill will impose a tax that will fall heavily upon those who are engaged outback in developing the country. On nearly all farms and big properties where there are orchards and crops, guns are used for the destruction of vermin. According to this Bill a license must be applied for to enable anyone to have a gun, but it requires a license to be issued for every gun that is used on the one place. The man who requires several guns, to shoot the different kinds of vermin on and around his place, will have to take out a license for each one, and this would run into a considerable sum of money. A man may have three or four different kinds of guns. Even if his son uses one of them a license must be taken out for him. This will create a hardship upon the people outback, and will take away from the boys a great deal of enjoyment. People in the city have every kind of pleasure put before them, but boys in the country get none. There is no better sport than shooting, but guns must be properly handled. They must not be used to cause more pain to animals and birds than is necessary. Nearly all country boys, when they have the opportunity, go out with a gun for pleasure, and put in their time shooting birds or vermin on their father's property, to help him keep the orchards and crops clear. It would be a great hardship for these boys to be deprived of that pleasure. Young people, of course, require to be educated in the use of firearms. My boys have been using guns since they were 12 years old. They have shot with the deadly pea rifle and the .44 Winchester, as well as the 12-bore breach loader. They have been out with parties, and when their shooting has been finished they have unloaded their guns and taken ever care in putting them away. With careful training the accidents that occur from time to time could be almost eliminated. Notwithstanding every care, accidents will occur.

BILL—INSPECTION OF SCAFFOLDING.

Reports of Committee adopted.

Mr. Davies: They can be minimised.

Hon. F. T. BROUN: Yes. The Bill, however, will not do that. Guns are often put away after use in some corner of a room, loft or stable, and are very often left loaded. It is natural for boys, when they find a gun lying about, to pick it up, and when the weapon is loaded an accident is sure to occur.

The Minister for Mines: We want the Bill to prevent that sort of thing.

Hon. F. T. BROUN: It will not have that effect.

The Minister for Mines: Of course it will.

Hon. F. T. BROUN: No amount of penalty or licenses will prevent the careless use of firearms. Weapons will still be left lying about for boys to pick up. Most of the accidents that have occurred—there have not been many—have occurred through the pea rifle. Boys should be educated up to the use of a gun. One of the most dangerous sports that anyone can indulge in is the shooting gallery. This Bill, however, does not provide for the taking out of a license for a shooting gallery. More than one accident has occurred in these places and yet no provision is made for them under this measure. Gun dealers and pawnbrokers have to be licensed to cover the guns they stock. They have to take out one license for the sale of all guns in their possession. That is all right for the person who sells guns, but in my opinion the pawnbroker should not be allowed to deal in firearms at all. Firearms that come into the possession of pawnbrokers are mostly second-hand weapons and many of them are not safe. Defects in the gun are covered up and that makes the weapon all the more dangerous. If anyone has a gun for sale, he can dispose of it, but many people would not take the trouble to send it to an expert to have it repaired properly. They are more content to sell to the pawnbrokers, who have not the consideration for humanity that one would like to see in evidence. The penalties provided are heavy. For having a gun in one's possession without a license the penalty is £10, and for carrying and using such a gun, £20. That is a tremendous penalty. I will vote against the second reading of the Bill and I hope it will be defeated. If the second reading is carried, I trust when in Committee members will agree to the penalties being reduced.

The Minister for Mines: What about the pawnbroker?

Hon. F. T. BROUN: I have already dealt with that individual.

The Minister for Mines: You said something about the pawnbroker, and the Bill provides exactly the opposite of what you suggested. Read Clause 11; we cannot do more than that.

Hon. F. T. BROUN: That applies to guns already in his possession before the Bill comes into force.

The Minister for Mines: But the pawnbroker cannot deal in firearms after the Bill becomes an Act.

Hon. F. T. BROUN: The Bill does not say that.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! These are details to be dealt with in Committee.

Hon. F. T. BROUN: While the penalties are heavy, the Bill goes further still. If a man is in the unlawful possession of a gun, it is deemed an offence and the police have the power to take the gun from him. Provision to that effect already exists in the Gun Licenses Act, but no such provision should be included in any Act. A man may have a valuable gun and through no fault of his own, it may be used by someone else. If the matter comes under the notice of the police, the gun can be confiscated and sold if the Magistrate issues an order to that effect. I know that the gun may be returned to the proper owner if the magistrate so decides, but such a drastic provision should not appear in the Bill. I hope the Bill will not be agreed to for the additional reason that all that is necessary is provided for in existing legislation. I do not know that the Act in question has been put into force, but under the existing law anyone in possession of a gun in the city or a municipality, and within a radius of five miles, must take out a license. That provision should cover everything that is necessary. The Bill would not be so bad if the Government would consent to a few amendments regarding the payment of fees. It is provided that a license must be taken out for each gun in the possession of an individual, and 5s. has to be paid for each gun. That will prove a hardship to people in the country. Generally speaking, there is no necessity for the Bill.

Mr. CHESSON (Cue) [4.51]: I oppose the Bill, because it is a taxation measure which will not bear equally on the people as a whole. Those in the country districts will be principally affected and will have to pay a large proportion of the tax. There is a Gun Licenses Act in force which applies to the larger centres of population. That Act is a dead letter. If the Bill becomes law, it will apply to the State as a whole.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: According to your argument the taxation is unequal at the present time as between the city and the country.

Mr. CHESSON: Rifle clubs will not be taxed under the Bill.

Mr. Underwood: The city people have nothing to shoot.

Mr. CHESSON: That is true. While rifle clubs will be exempt, people in the outback parts, who, of necessity, have to be in the possession of firearms, will be heavily taxed. While the rifle club member will be exempt, the kangaroo shooter will have to pay his tax. Farmers must keep firearms to protect their crops from pests, including birds, kangaroos, or opossums. For every rifle that a kangaroo shooter has in his possession, including breech loaders, and rifles of different calibres, he will have to pay a separate fee of 5s. The Mines Department recognise that

it is necessary for the people outback to have firearms, for when they send out prospecting parties, it is stipulated that their impedimenta must include guns and ammunition. The Department realises that the party will depend on the gun for meat supplies. The fees amount to a sectional tax. There is no necessity for people in the cities and large towns to have firearms. In addition to rifle club members, people belonging to the naval, military, and air forces, as well as the police, are exempt. I agree with that provision, for if a man joins His Majesty's forces, or belongs to a rifle club, he should not be taxed. But the farmer must have firearms in his possession to protect his crop and should not be taxed. Then again, the Bill provides power for the police to search any person without a warrant. I have seen officers in country districts carrying out their duties and getting on well with the community. I know of other police officers who, if given the power to search without a warrant, are not to be trusted. There is no telling how far they will go. The Bill also provides for a penalty of £20 if a person is found carrying firearms unlawfully between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. I cannot see why there should be any distinction, simply because the weapon is carried at night. In the country districts people have to use their firearms at night and I cannot see why it is a more serious offence to carry a rifle after 7 p.m. It is also provided that if a person carries firearms after 7 p.m. and before 7 a.m. he will be liable to an additional penalty of six months' imprisonment. Then again power is vested in the Commissioner of Police, or a police officer, to refuse a license to persons of intemperate habits. When kangaroo shooters come into town they very often take a drop of drink. If we place the power in the hands of the police officer to say whether an individual is of intemperate habits, he can refuse to grant a license to kangaroo shooters. Some of those men are among the best shots in the State, and I cannot understand why we should be asked to place such powers in the hands of the police. I am at a loss to understand why it is desired to give an officer power to say that because a man happens to take a drop of drink he should be refused the right to have a license. Of course, there is provision for an appeal, but we know what the cost of carrying out an appeal amounts to, and it is not everybody who can afford to appeal. The Bill also prohibits the sale of firearms by any unlicensed person, and power is practically given to any person to ask another who may desire to dispose of a gun, whether he holds a license for the sale of firearms. There is also provision that any gun dealer, or a repairer of guns, must have a certificate, and for the privilege of having that certificate he must pay £1. It stands to reason that that charge will be passed on, and it will mean a further tax on those who depend on the gun for a livelihood. Why should a person be prohibited from realising on his firearms if he should have no further use for them? Another objectionable provision is that an

officer may search any cart, vehicle, boat or vessel in which he suspects there may be firearms, as the result of which a breach of the peace may be committed. The Bill also deals with the safe keeping of firearms. It may so happen, however, that the owner of a crop may desire to keep a gun in a handy position in order to use it to destroy animals, and if anyone should get away with that gun, and leave it lying about, the owner will be liable to a penalty in addition to running the risk of losing the gun. The Bill also deals with the handling of weapons by children under 16 years of age. I contend that parents or guardians should teach children how to use firearms; in fact, the use of firearms should be included in the school curriculum. We are aware that many accidents arise out of the careless use of the pea-rifle, but that is often the fault of the parents. I have a boy and I taught him at about ten years of age how to use firearms. We frequently find that lads of from ten to 15 years of age are better shots than their parents. The careless use of firearms is often the result of want of knowledge. There is a clause also which prohibits the use of the maxim silencer. We are aware that kangaroo shooters make use of this silencer, and are thus able to get close to the kangaroos. Why should we prohibit the use of it? I have here an extract from the "Murchison Times" dealing with this proposed legislation, and the article is such that I am justified in reading it to the House:—

A Bill, having for its object the better control of persons possessing firearms, is now before Parliament. The main feature is the imposition of a 5s. fee for registration, to be controlled by the head of the Police Department, who is to judge whether the person applying for registration is mentally fit or perhaps an alien to whom it "may be undesirable to issue registration." Although not clearly stated, another object aimed at is to try to prevent the too often recurrence of accidental deaths, which are the result of careless and ignorant use of firearms. In this latter direction, the Bill as it stands will not do much by way of minimising the evil. Very few deaths occur through the use of firearms, either in hands of murderers or mentally deficient persons, whereas a great many fatalities occur through the carelessness and ignorance of persons who are as sane as most people. The provisions of the Bill do not restrict these persons from obtaining firearms further than imposing a fee of 5s. Ignorance, carelessness, and the make of the weapon seem to be the main factors in causing the deaths of the greater number, and it is safe to say that the build or make of the weapon is the worst of all. From its infancy a child is taught by giving it a toy gun—quite the opposite to what it should be taught regarding firearms. Is it any wonder that later when handling the real article mistakes occur? Why not insert a clause in the Bill that children be taught in our

schools how to handle firearms? Then in regard to the type of firearm allowed to be sold. A very large percentage of accidents caused by firearms occur through the use of guns which have the striking hammer exposed. In proof of this, a perusal of coronial inquiries will reveal the fact. Here are some of the explanations given and accepted as the cause of the accident—"The hammer slipped," "the hammer must have struck something," or "the hammer got caught whilst pulling the gun towards him." In view of the fact that hammerless guns are made, would it not be a wise precaution to prohibit the sale of all weapons having the hammers exposed. In regard to the pea rifle, which is a hammer gun, this deadly little toy is exceptionally dangerous through being by far too short, thus allowing even a small lad to lean over the muzzle whilst the butt is placed on the ground. The Hon. J. Scaddan, who introduced the Bill, does not appear to be very certain as to the measure of good the Bill will do, and seems to invite assistance in amending it. Why not amend it by introducing clauses: (1) Prohibiting the sale of all firearms having the hammer exposed. (2) Making it compulsory that children be taught at school the proper manner in which to handle firearms and warned of the great danger of carelessness regarding same. (3) That no pea rifle less than 4ft. 6in. in length be registered. The insertion of these clauses in the Bill would materially strengthen it and tend to lessen the chances of accidents occurring.

I know the author of the article; he has had considerable experience in the back country, and has used firearms of every description. I am in thorough accord with the latter portion of the article dealing with the pea-rifle. Regarding hammer guns, I have known of accidents happening through the hammer getting caught. The hammerless gun is practically safe from the point of view that there is no danger of it going off. Generally speaking, I am opposed to the Bill because it is nothing but a taxation measure, and will not bear equally on the people. It will bear more heavily on those living in the distant country districts who are less able to meet the burden. The Bill gives too great a power to the police. What will be asked of us next? If we give the police all the power proposed in the Bill, the next thing will be that we shall be asked to give power to enable the authorities to enter a person's house. We may expect to hear that it is proposed to introduce legislation to tax walking sticks which may be put up as maxim silencers. I intend to vote against the second reading, and hope that the Bill will be rejected.

Mr. PIESSE (Toodyay) [5.13]: I have pleasure in endorsing the remarks of the member for Beverley (Mr. Broun). I cannot see that there is any great need for the Bill. It is true that we have had accidents, particularly with the pea-rifle, but those ac-

cidents are few in number compared with the number of people who use that rifle. It will be a great injustice, in fact it will be extremely hard if youths of 10, 12, or 14 years of age are forbidden to use rifles, even the small saloon rifles which are so valuable in an orchard. In my orchard we destroyed 25,000 to 30,000 silver-eyes in eight or ten years. The consumption of ammunition was 3,000 or 4,000 cartridges a year, and most of them were fired by children as young as 10 years. Both boys and girls are useful where the bird pest is troublesome. We destroyed as many as 250 birds in one day. If the age of 16 were fixed, it would be a serious matter for the orchardists. Few members realise the enormous destruction wrought by this one pest alone. In Gallop's vineyard, when the vines were in full bearing, about 50,000 cartridges were used yearly and practically the whole of them were fired by school children. I would be sorry to see further taxation imposed in this way. If it is desired to get a record of all arms held by the public, let the registration fee be nominal. The age limit would have to be reduced to enable children to assist the orchardists in destroying these pests. Rabbits are assuming serious proportions. Last year they ate out all the young vines in two vineyards at Toodyay. Over 400 vines were destroyed in one case, and in the other case the whole of the vineyard was destroyed. Youths of 12 to 14 years are better marksmen than many adults and they prove very useful in destroying rabbits. The same argument might be advanced with regard to marsupials. In Committee I hope that the age limit will be reduced to 12 and that the registration fee will be considerably lowered. There are pests other than those I have mentioned that are troublesome and have to be coped with. The operations of the existing law are restricted to areas within a few miles of municipalities. I agree with the member for Cue (Mr. Chesson) that it would be a hardship for hunters to have to pay a license fee for each gun. In many cases they have quite a number of guns. The Bill requires to be materially amended in many directions.

Mr. UNDERWOOD (Pilbara) [5.20] I ask members to oppose the second reading. The Minister has not given any sound reasons for passing the Bill. As the member for Cue (Mr. Chesson) has pointed out, it will be not only a tax on a section of the people, but a vexation. It will be one of those paltry, miserable, vexatious taxes that antagonise the people who, after all, are the producers in this State. The Minister said the Bill followed largely on the lines of legislation in force in England, Victoria, and New South Wales. Imagine trying to apply a law to Western Australia on the ground that it is in force in England! Is that any reason at all? The other large States of

Australia—Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory—have not adopted it and we are in a position similar to theirs. Yet the Minister says because a similar law is in force in England, where is nothing to shoot, it should be adopted here. There may have been something to shoot in Ireland a few years ago. All there was to shoot in Ireland was landlords, but they have given out.

Mr. Davies: What about New South Wales?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: That State is one-third of the size and has eight times the population of Western Australia. Can any comparison be drawn there? It is proposed that the measure be administered by the police. Most of the police exercise considerable discretion, but a percentage do not, and I can imagine a man being brought in 40, 50, or possibly 100 miles from the back country and taken before a magistrate and fined 5s. because he had not a license for a gun, a gun probably purchased by someone passing through the District, the new owner not being a gun dealer. The policeman would say, "You have two guns and only one license. Come with me." The Minister said the Bill would minimise accidents. If we want to minimise accidents, we should first prohibit aeroplanes, but more dangerous even than aeroplanes are motor cycles. Almost every day of the week we read of two or three accidents with motor cycles, but we do not read of one accident a month with a gun. If the object of our legislation is to prevent accidents, let us start on those machines that cause most accidents.

The Minister for Mines: A lot of people die in bed.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I am aware of that, but not owing to accidents. A gun is infinitely more essential to the development of this State than is a motor cycle. Some members have referred to the pests. The member for Toodyay (Mr. Piccse) mentioned the silver-eye, and reference has been made to kangaroos. If there were no kangaroo shooters in the North-West, there would be practically no sheep. The kangaroos would eat out the whole of the country and it would be impossible to keep sheep in that part of the State. The only way to keep kangaroos down is with the gun. Again, the gun is very handy for dealing with the dingo pest. I know of no instrument so handy for killing a snake. If a snake gets into some place where it is impossible to reach it with a stick, a shot-gun is the finest thing to kill it. When we go into the bush we have to run the risk of these things, and why should we be penalised, compelled to pay a license, put to the vexation of having our places searched by the police, and compelled to travel miles and miles to take out a license? Has the Minister shown that accidents are increasing? The use of firearms is increasing. Has he shown any more reason than existed 20 years ago for this prohibition on firearms? I can show that there is more necessity for their use nowadays,

owing to the increase of pests outside the municipal areas? The Minister said that if a licensed person lent his gun to someone not entitled to have a gun, the owner would be responsible. In answer to an interjection, he admitted that if the borrower committed a murder, the lender would not be responsible for the murder. What responsibility does he take?

The Minister for Mines: It is a contravention of the Act?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: He could be brought before a magistrate and fined 10s.

The Minister for Mines: What would you do?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Why trouble about such a paltry thing? The Minister said aliens may not be allowed to own firearms. Has he put up any case to justify that? Has he shown that aliens have done any harm by holding firearms? None at all. I remember the incident at Broome, but the aliens there had no firearms. I remember Matamin, but he hit a man out with a stick. I remember another who shot the owner of the Mulla-munda station, but he used a gun belonging to the station. When a Minister introduces legislation of this description that is going to aggravate a very large section of the people, he should justify it by quoting actual instances of danger having arisen. The Minister should have given us some instances to prove that a measure such as this would have prevented an accident or an offence. Throughout his speech the Minister refrained from attempting to show that the Bill would in the slightest degree decrease the risk of accident with firearms. He can only tell us that some people will be liable to prosecution and a fine of 10s. if the Bill passes. Under this measure everybody owning a gun will be in the disagreeable position of possibly having his premises searched by a police constable, and of possibly being hauled before a magistrate for a matter of 5s. I think the Government would do well to drop the Bill.

Mr. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [5.32]: The Bill represents an unwarranted interference with the liberty of the subject. We are getting too much of this license business, particularly in the outback areas.

The Premier: There is a gun license now. Mr. WILLCOCK: But it is not very strictly enforced. To debar anybody from owning a gun for fear of something that may happen is quite unnecessary. Accidents are liable to occur in any circumstances. The Inspection of Scaffolding Bill is intended to prevent accidents on scaffolding. But scaffolding is a different thing from a gun. It has been proved that in the past scaffolding has not been so safe as it ought to have been.

Mr. A. Thomson: That has not been proved.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I know of an instance in point. But people do not go about with dangerous firearms, simply because they know that these are liable to go off and injure the bearers. People in the outback portions of the State make use of firearms, and get a

considerable amount of recreation out of doing so. This Bill represents just that little bit of extra taxation which is apt to prove the last straw.

The Premier: People have to pay gun licences now.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Outback residents do not have to pay. The passing of this Bill will mean that the man outback will not take out a license and will not have a gun. On the Murchison, I can state from experience, nearly everybody has a gun. In every camp of fettlers there are one or two persons who own guns, though the weapons are not used very much. Three or four men camped together cannot play cricket or football, and therefore on Saturday afternoons they go out with guns, to provide themselves with a little amusement and incidentally to obtain a little meat. Perhaps what we have heard about Bolshevik propaganda and red revolution has got on somebody's nerves, and he is determined to find out where all the guns are.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The revolutionaries would not be licensed.

Mr. WILLCOCK: No. All over the country we hear of foxes having been seen. That pest should be stopped in its inception, instead of being practically encouraged by this vexatious Bill.

The Premier: Can you tell me how many people have lost their lives owing to carelessness with firearms during the last year or two?

Mr. WILLCOCK: The Minister for Mines should have told us that in moving the second reading. He can obtain the information from the police. If we had it, we should be able to form an intelligent judgment on the Bill. I have not heard of an extraordinary number of accidents from the use of firearms. Possibly there is one every two or three months, and probably there would be the same number if this Bill were passed. People cannot always be watching children, and it is true that young children are apt to get hold of firearms when the elders are out.

Mr. Chesson: Many accidents have been caused through defective firearms.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Little children of seven or eight are frequently the cause of accidents with firearms. That is the age at which casualties of that kind are most likely to occur. But boys of 12 or 13 can use firearms with benefit to themselves and their parents. They can provide food, and keep down foxes, wild dogs, crows, and other pests. I do not consider this Bill necessary at all. It will mean a grievous harm to the people outback. It is a form of taxation frequently introduced into this House, penalising no one to any great extent but amounting to a good deal in the aggregate. These taxes annoy the people. If the tax were knocked out, the Government would not go on with the Bill.

The Premier: Oh, yes! We do not want the tax.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I think the Government would very soon drop the Bill if the tax were struck out.

The Premier: Not at all.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Then I shall certainly move in Committee that the taxing provision of the Bill be struck out. I agree that the taxation feature of the Bill is an iniquity, and that the demand for everybody to register is another iniquity. I strongly object to the provision that the police may search houses. In fact, I do not think there is anything in the Bill that I can support. Therefore I oppose the second reading.

Mr. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [5.41]: The disadvantages and hardships which would accrue to the people outback from the passing of the Bill as it stands have been ably put forward by the member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood) and other hon. members representing distant constituencies. There are, however, one or two provisions of the Bill which would be of decided advantage to the State. Probably effect could be given to those provisions by an amendment of the existing Act, in place of passing this Bill. I support what the member for Pilbara has said as to the increase of dingoes at a very rapid rate throughout the State. Then there are rabbits and even foxes. In the further eastern portions of the Gascoyne district, eagles, hawks are creating many losses amongst lambs. The consequence is that the pastoralist, whenever he has a boundary rider or a station hand going out to do any work, endeavours to see that the man carries a gun with him, in the hope that if an opportunity occurs of getting rid of a dingo or eagle-hawk, the gun will be used. We cannot expect all station hands to take out gun licenses and supply themselves with guns. Consequently, if the Bill is passed, the station owner would have to carry 10 or 12 firearms on the property. That is not a great hardship, perhaps, but still it is a penalty; and we should endeavour to help the pastoralist to get rid of the pests which are becoming so numerous throughout Western Australia. Further, it is an advantage to us to encourage our lads and young men to become accustomed to the use of firearms. Every encouragement should be given them to acquire such knowledge. After all, it was not the cadets who made such a name for Australia in the war, but men of maturer years, accustomed to rough riding and the use of firearms. I trust the Government will not insist on the Bill going through in its present form. An amendment of the existing Act, to prohibit boys from carrying firearms, and getting rid of one or two other abuses now existing, would suffice in place of this Bill.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. J. Scaddan—Albany—in reply) [5.44]: I am not altogether surprised at the criticism of the Bill, because I am doubtful whether many members really know the provisions of the existing law. It was very evident from the remarks of the last speaker that that hon. member does not know the present law. He emphasised only one point, with regard to which I may remark that no amendment of existing legislation is necessary to prevent young per-

sons from holding a gun license. The only difference between the Bill and the Act of 1885 is that firearms all over the State will be registered, instead of merely those within municipalities and within five miles beyond; and the administration will be in the hands of the police. At present it is a dead letter. We are bringing legislation for the control of firearms into line with that of the other States. The only real objection raised to the Bill is that it imposes a 5s. fee in respect of each firearm. When I moved the second reading I explained that I had no objection to making the fee cover all the firearms in possession of any one person or family.

Mr. Marshall: Would the Bill prevent accidents with firearms?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Of course not. Yet we desire to do all we can to prevent accidents. Social legislation is passed, not because everybody in the community is a wrongdoer, but for the protection of those who are not wrongdoers. The Bill is not to prevent the use of firearms, but merely their misuse to the danger of persons in the vicinity. Only recently between Perth and Bunbury a man took a revolver into a railway compartment and insisted upon showing its action to those in the carriage. Presently he accidentally shot a man.

Mr. Marshall: Well, if he had been licensed under the Bill, could not the accident have happened just the same?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, certainly. We have a law prohibiting the furious driving of motor cars, yet it does not prevent accidents with motor cars.

Mr. A. Thomson: You will not allow anybody without a license to drive a motor car.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: And even that does not prevent all accidents. Still, we try to do all we can in that direction. Capital punishment does not prevent murder.

Mr. Underwood: Well, why bring this in? It will not be effective.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It will be effective, at all events, to some extent. We have here a law prohibiting the hon. member from interjecting in this Chamber, yet he persists in interjecting, and even makes most of his speeches in that way. Still that is not to say we should abolish that law. The Bill will serve to reveal where the firearms are, how they are kept, and the conditions under which they are used. The member for Cue (Mr. Chesson) suggested that we should prevent the sale and use of all firearms with hammers. There might be something in that. It was also suggested to me that under the Bill we should allow the use of no firearms with fewer than three actions. Probably that would serve to prevent accidents—but where would the snake be while one was getting through his three actions? I have had experience with guns, and I know how handy the quick action is when there is a snake to be dealt with. There is nothing in the Bill to prevent a gun being used for the killing of a snake. Indeed, it is merely an extension

of the legislation of 1885. I agree with the member for Beverley (Hon. F. T. Broun) that we ought not to restrict the use of firearms for legitimate purposes. It would not be desirable to restrict the use of poison for legitimate purposes; yet we make laws against the use of poison for other than legitimate purposes. That is all we are doing in respect of firearms. I have no desire to impose any restriction on the use of firearms for legitimate purposes.

Hon. F. T. Broun: Yet in this you are penalising by £3 per annum every farmer with three sons.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member hops in and out like a chirpy sparrow. He did not hear the speech with which I moved the second reading. I then told the Chamber that we would be prepared to make the fee merely a nominal one, and to provide for the one fee covering all firearms held by one family.

Mr. Underwood: How many accidents are there under present conditions?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member would know if he read his newspaper. During the last twelve months there have been many accidents among children. A mere boy attending a primary school in Perth went to a dealer, purchased a revolver and ammunition, carried it into the school and, although he knew nothing whatever about it, showed it to the other children. It is necessary that we should provide for the proper control of firearms and the licensing of gun dealers.

Hon. F. T. Broun: I have no objection to the licensing of gun dealers.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Well, when the dealer takes out the license, we must restrict him in the sale of guns, must provide that he may sell to some persons, but not to others. We have exactly the same provision in the Poisons Act.

Hon. F. T. Broun: But has the Minister considered what the effect will be?

The SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot on the second reading discuss the Bill in Committee.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Accidents will happen, irrespective of precautionary measures. We have had accidents in this Chamber: umbrellas falling from the gallery, and radiators knocked over and broken. We do not wish to restrict the proper use of firearms, but we want to prescribe that they shall not be used in a manner dangerous to the community. Even in and around the city of Perth firearms are used; and there are no means of stopping it, because the existing system of registration represents merely the payment of a license fee. Boys use pea-rifles in Perth.

Hon. F. T. Broun: And you allow them to be used in shooting galleries.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: How many accidents occur at shooting galleries? If that were the only danger, there would be little need for the Bill. We do not desire to make of this a taxing measure. The fee will be

only a nominal one. We must put a restriction upon the free use of firearms, and we propose to do that by placing the responsibility on persons in possession of firearms.

Mr. Piesse: Can you not get sufficient registration under the existing Act?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No, it applies only to municipalities and areas within five miles beyond. Moreover, the existing Act is a dead letter. It is administered by a Treasury official. The proposed legislation is operating in several of the States of Australia and in New Zealand.

Mr. Underwood interjected.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: This is what the Commissioner of Police in New Zealand said in his annual report.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member should have presented this document when moving the second reading. He is not now replying to statements made in the course of the debate.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: But the member for Pilbara said—

The SPEAKER: The Minister need not reply to interjections.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: On the second reading I said the proposed legislation was operating in Great Britain, in some of the Eastern States, and in New Zealand. In his annual report, the Commissioner of Police in New Zealand said—

Arms Act, 1920.—This Act, which came into force in January, 1921, entailed a great amount of work upon the police, but this is decreasing with the completion of the original registrations and as persons who have, or desire to obtain firearms, are becoming educated to the provisions of the Act. The system of registration has revealed the fact that there was an extraordinary number of firearms in the Dominion; and, though none but automatic pistols were called in, there is no doubt than in the course of time a strict but fair and uniform enforcement of the Act will result in a reduction in the number of firearms in proportion to the increased population, and also a considerable reduction in the number of cases in which the more dangerous class of firearms is in the possession of irresponsible persons and others who have no legitimate use for such weapons. The consequent effect of this should be fewer accidents, less use of firearms in committing crimes, and greater safety for the public generally.

That is all we are aiming at.

Mr. Underwood: How, under the Bill, are you to find out who are responsible?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Responsible for what? If we could adopt the attitude the hon. member is suggesting, no crime would ever be committed. We could find out before the person intended to commit the crime that he proposed to do so, and we could then prevent him. Under this Bill we will have a proper record of all firearms, and those that it is dangerous for irresponsible

persons to handle. If accidents occur after all these precautions, we cannot be held responsible.

Mr. Underwood: You are not responsible afterwards, and can do no good before.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member ought to ask for the repeal of the Act. If it is found desirable to provide for the registration of all firearms in municipalities, it should be equally desirable to provide the conditions laid down in this Bill. The accidents that occur are not always attributable to those who use firearms for the destruction of vermin. No one ought to be permitted to indulge carelessly in sport to the injury of others. A man can still shoot kangaroos under this Bill, even if they are out of season, and other game as well, but he will have to use his firearms in a proper way, and care for them afterwards so as to prevent others from taking them and injuring or killing some person. It is always the declared unloaded gun that goes off. Apart from the provision that every person in possession of a gun shall require to register, there is no restriction imposed by the Bill upon the use of firearms other than exists to-day. There may be some slight inconvenience caused to persons through having to take out licenses, and such licenses may be made to cover a period of five years if it is desired. The Bill will call upon those people who are in the habit of using such dangerous firearms as automatic pistols and revolvers and hammerless guns, to say nothing of the pea-rifle, to do so in the right way. We are entitled to provide for the proper control of firearms. If a person wilfully leaves a loaded firearm lying about to be taken possession of by some child and used to the detriment of others, he ought to be held responsible. These are practically the only provisions contained in the Bill.

Question put and negatived; Bill defeated.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Mr. Premier, are you going to move the adjournment of the House? The second reading of a Government Bill has been defeated. That has always been recognised as a defeat of the Government.

The Premier: I want you to take the responsibility.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1923-24.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from 18th September; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair.

Department of Lands and Repatriation (Hon. Sir James Mitchell, Minister).

Vote—*Lands and Surveys, £96,446* (partly considered).

Hon. F. T. BROWN (Beverley) [6.5]: I congratulate the Premier upon his efforts to develop the group settlement system, and to open up the vast areas of the South-West. That part of the State is capable of growing some of the finest products in Australia. For 20 years people have complained that we

have been importing into Western Australia products that could be grown here. In the South-west all these products can be grown and a large outgoings prevented. I have listened to the criticism against group settlement. I admit there is fault to be found with the administration, but on the whole the methods and policy have so far been satisfactory. I congratulate the Premier upon this gigantic undertaking. It will involve the expenditure of a large sum of money. It is only natural that there should be a certain amount of loss in developing such a big scheme, and in opening up so much new country. Last year I had the privilege of visiting two of the group settlements, and was greatly interested in what was being done there. It has been pointed out that a great portion of the land in the South-West will increase in value as the years go on. A sum of at least £60 an acre has been mentioned as being the future value of these blocks. In the clearing on the No. 41 group I noticed that a large number of karri butts had been left on the ground. It would be too expensive to take out all the timber, but many of these butts could have been burned with the timber that was raked up and burned in other parts of the block. On account of the manner in which the burning off was carried out, much time and labour were wasted. The results obtained were not as efficient as they might have been. The first cost of clearing is the one chiefly to be considered. That cost will be set against the value of the blocks in the future. Had the butts been burned out in the way I have suggested, more land would have been made available for cultivation. At least one-fifth of the land in the group I have mentioned is covered with stumps, which will remain for a considerable period. It is only possible to get rid of them now by means of explosives, which is too costly a procedure. These butts will, therefore, be in the way of the plough and the other implements used in farming. Apart from this phase of the settlement, one cannot complain. Those who have inspected the various blocks recently say that good progress is being made, and that there is every likelihood in the near future of the settlers being able to stock their land and commence earning a livelihood upon it. I have no doubt there will be great prosperity throughout the South-West. What is needed there is a supervisor who understands clearing and economic methods of farming. With such capable supervision the scheme must be a success. I fear that the Premier has not the men at his disposal who have the necessary experience to direct these group settlers, and teach them how to carry on their work economically. Experienced men of this character are few and far between. In 1911, when I first stood for Parliament, the Premier was condemned for opening up the wheat belt. Had I taken the Premier into my district at that time he would probably have been crucified by the settlers. When putting up for Parliament I had to fight only the Premier.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There was a partial drought then.

Hon. F. T. BROWN: Yes. I was confident, however, that Sir James Mitchell was right in his policy, that he knew what he was doing, and that the outcome would be satisfactory. The farmers who remained on the land, in pursuance of that policy, are well-off to-day.

Mr. Latham: They have made fortunes.

Hon. F. T. BROWN: They have done better than we have along the Great Southern. Men who nine years ago had practically nothing, and did not know where the next meal was to come from, are to-day riding in their motor cars, have nice homes, and are mostly married.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I hope some of your members will recollect that when they are pleading poverty.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. F. T. BROWN: I was pointing out how the settlers in the eastern districts have progressed under the land settlement scheme inaugurated by Sir James Mitchell. I feel certain that as time goes on, the same result will be found in the South-West. It is true that when a big scheme is undertaken to develop a belt of country so heavily timbered, many difficulties have to be contended with. I am convinced that the scheme, under the able and optimistic administration of the Premier, will be a success. It depends almost entirely upon those who are in charge of the work, carrying out the policy of the Premier. It has been said, inside and outside the House, that the Premier has no policy in connection with his group settlement scheme. I have seen letters in the Press from some of the settlers on the groups, in which they stated that they did not know what the policy of the Government was, so far as the allotment of the different blocks was concerned. When the Premier replies, I would like him to make a statement on that point. The settlers apparently want to know what their position really is. When a man goes on to a group he naturally is concerned about the conditions applying to the blocks and he wants some information to decide whether he will continue and settle on a block.

The Premier: The settler signs the conditions before he goes down!

Hon. F. T. BROWN: I am given to understand that such is the case, but these statements are made outside the Chamber and have been repeated in letters appearing in the Press. Those who received the complaints would do well to go to the group settlements themselves and find out the real facts. There are men going to the group settlements who will not be satisfied. There is always a small percentage in every undertaking, whatever it may be, who will be dissatisfied. Unfortunately, a few of those who are dissatisfied are making these statements and naturally their views are spread about in reports and notice is taken of them. The

result is that the scheme gets a bad name. I am convinced it will be successful and I congratulate the Premier upon undertaking it. Some such movement was badly needed in Western Australia, particularly when we realise how much money is going from the State to purchase products we are capable of growing here. Regarding the opening up of new land throughout Western Australia, it has been said by some members that there are large estates that should be purchased by the Government or brought within the scope of a Closer Settlement Bill. It is not a wise policy to repurchase estates until all the Crown lands are exhausted. Every effort should be made to have the available Crown land selected and to see that these lands are exhausted before any such policy of repurchasing estates is undertaken.

Mr. Latham: Many of them are too far from the railways.

Hon. F. T. BROWN: Crown lands are available within a reasonable distance of the railways, more particularly in the South-West. It is not wise to break down before building up something to show that the new condition is better and more profitable than the old. Many of the large estates close to railways are highly developed. At any rate, that remark applies to the major portion of them in the eastern districts. Those holdings are producing well. It is impossible for members to say by way of comparison that land is not producing simply because the railways are not paying. It is impossible to find out the exact figures regarding produce transported over the railways, because in many cases freight is paid at the other end by the consignee. This makes it very difficult to find out the amount of produce sent over the railways. Many successful farmers are doing much towards aiding the development of our agricultural lands. New settlers coming to the State have been brought in contact with agriculturists at meetings of branches of the Farmers and Settlers' Association in their respective districts, and they have been given advice by experienced men. I would mention two in particular—Mr. A. J. Monger and Mr. Burges. They have large and highly developed properties. They do not hesitate to give newcomers good advice, and it is the more valuable because they are conducting experiments on their properties. That applies more especially to Mr. Monger who, by reason of the top dressing system which he has experimented with, has shown results that will revolutionise land production in the Great Southern and the eastern districts. Under that system, the stock-carrying capacity of the land will be increased and our areas will be able to carry two sheep to the acre, instead of one. I am convinced, after farming for many years and gaining a lot of experience, that our lands along the Great Southern railway and in the eastern districts within, say, a limit of 30 miles to the east and the west, do not comprise a wheat growing area. Other settlers are satisfied, too, that that is not the wheat growing

portion of the State. In order to successfully grow wheat, we must go further east, into the drier districts. Farmers are producing wheat profitably there and some are making fortunes. Experience has shown that land soon becomes wheat-sick. After taking off a couple of crops, it is difficult to make the land as productive as ever. Farmers can use manures, cultivate and work it in every way possible, yet the necessary results cannot be obtained. We are now finding out that we have been wasting our time on our holdings in attempting to grow wheat. The result is that farmers are now turning their attention to the growing of rape, peas and oats for sheep, and by top dressing, which of itself produces clovers, we are increasing the stock-carrying capacity of the land, particularly with the aid of subterranean clovers. This will be of tremendous advantage to the land east and west of the Great Southern. We had to learn that from experience and we find that our properties are better adapted to that treatment. In carrying out these experiments and gaining this end, it cannot be said that holdings in that part of the State should be cut up into smaller areas. I do not believe that any man should hold 6,000 or 7,000 acres in these districts, but he must be allowed a fair area of land, otherwise he cannot continue on his property and work it as he should. Every man who goes on the land must expect something more than a reasonable livelihood. He must secure a fair profit, otherwise he will not be content to stay there. To-day farmers have to contend with many difficulties, more particularly the different diseases that are to be found in stock. I have proved myself that it is necessary to have a fairly large area of land so that a portion of it may be left with timber growing on it. When the paddocks are denuded of all timber, sheep diseases increase, and that is a matter I intend to deal with later on when discussing the Vote for the Agricultural Department. One of the principal mistakes we have made in the past has been to allow stock to graze in open paddocks, where there is no timber country at all. If the areas are circumscribed and limited, a farmer cannot work his land successfully and keep it up to the standard that it was in when he first broke it up. It is necessary to have a considerable area so as to carry out the rotation system—fallowing one year, cropping the next and leaving the stubble for fodder during the third year. If the requisite area is available, the farmer can keep the land up to the required standard and leave it of some use to those who may follow him on the property. We do not want to take everything out of the soil and starve it. By the growing of fodders under the top dressing system, we will bring the land gradually back to standard. Under this system the land along the Great Southern railway will steadily increase in value, because the stock-carrying capacity within 10 years will be practically doubled. That is a lot to say, but I am pretty sure in making that statement

from the experience I have had during the last few years.

Mr. Willcock: Will that mean a sheep to the acre?

Hon. F. T. BROWN: Yes. Quite that.

Mr. Latham: Some of the farmers are running a sheep to the acre now.

Hon. F. T. BROWN: That is so. With increased cultivation of the soil and keeping it up to standard, we will improve the value of our stock and our wool. It would be astounding to hon. members if they looked back a few years and noted the average weight of fleeces the stock were producing in those days and compared the result with what is achieved now. The quality of wool has improved and the weight has nearly doubled.

Mr. Willcock: You went in for mutton sheep some years ago.

Hon. F. T. BROWN: Not altogether. I know a number of settlers at Beverley who did not do so. If we continue to care for the soil as we have been doing lately, there will be room for hundreds of settlers to come on to those areas, because we can cut down our blocks considerably and live just as well and make as much as we are making to-day on half the areas. It is a mistake to have too much land. A man has not the money to cultivate the whole of it, with the result that he is carrying on 5,000 acres the number of sheep he should be carrying on 2,500 acres. When this policy is adopted, there will be room for many more settlers along the Great Southern line. The present, however, is not the time to cut up big estates. We do not need a Closer Settlement Bill for that purpose. What we desire can be brought about by an unimproved land tax. Let us put it up five times, eight times if you like, in order to force those people who hold land to cultivate it. They should either do that or get out.

Mr. Willcock: What would you reckon a fair sized holding?

Hon. F. T. BROWN: Anything between 2,000 and 3,000 acres. If there happened to be a fair amount of rock country, then you would need 3,000 acres. We should not attempt to pull down a structure unless we can put in its place another which will prove more profitable and successful than its predecessor. We should utilise the whole of our Crown lands, and when those lands are exhausted, then we can say what we will do with the big estates. This will probably be the last opportunity I will have of speaking on the Lands Estimates, as I do not intend to stand for Parliament again. I do hope that the Premier will be successful in his scheme of land settlement and my good wishes go with him. I will watch the progress being made in the group settlements with special interest, and should any other Government be returned to power, I take it that that Government will carry on the scheme, the foundation of which was laid by the Premier, and that it will be

built up as an edifice of which the present Premier may be proud.

Mr. LATHAM (York) [8.50]: Everyone is calling out for economy to-day, but I did not expect to find that it would be practised in connection with the Lands Department. The Estimates show that the Premier proposes to spend less this year than he spent last year. One wonders whether that is a wise policy; whether it is economy in the right direction. Everyone to-day is looking towards the land settlement policy to clear up the deficiency which has been recurring year after year, and I hope the Premier will not go back on that policy simply because he may desire to economise.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The expenditure on this policy is from loan.

Mr. LATHAM: But a lot of preliminary work is paid for out of Consolidated Revenue. I hope the Premier will tell the House what he intends to do along the southern boundary of our coast land, that part of the State between the Great Southern railway and Esperance. There must be good land there which could safely be used for wheat growing. I am concerned about the wheat production of this State. It is by that means that we can get revenue quickly. We should utilise our wheat lands to the fullest extent, and we should give our own people the first opportunity to settle on them, and then deal with the newcomers afterwards. I hope the Premier will send out officers who will be capable of furnishing reports as to the class of land in that territory to which I have referred, so that we may know what it will be capable of producing, and that next session his Government, or whichever Government may be in power, will ask the House to furnish a bigger sum for the opening up of that area. I agree with the member for Beverley (Mr. Brown) with regard to group settlement. I believe we are going to make a success of it. No matter what Government may be occupying the Ministerial bench, whether it be a Labour, Country Party, or composite Ministry, something will have to be done to increase settlement on the southern areas. No great harm will come to this State even if we do sacrifice some money in the process of the development of the south. I do not want to see the people go through the hardships that were experienced in Gippsland. No one, I am sure, desires to see the sacrifice of human life which in Gippsland was out of all proportion to the value of that country. The Premier has adopted a wise plan by appointing a special officer for the purpose of supervising operations in connection with group settlement, because when it comes to making payments of 10s. a day, a careful watch must be kept on the work done. Value must be given for the payments that are made.

Mr. Davies: What would you suggest as an alternative?

Mr. LATHAM: I am congratulating the Premier on his policy; I agree with it. Does the hon. member wish me to say anything

unkind about it? I do not care who occupies the Ministerial bench; I will stand behind the Government if the policy of the Government is the same as that now in progress. We have to guard the State's finances. We are settling the land on lines that were never attempted before, and we have to be careful to see that the money is not wasted. I hope that the time of the officer who has been appointed will be wholly devoted to watching operations in the South-West. The question of soldier settlement appears to be evergreen and will continue to be evergreen for years to come. I hope the Premier will definitely decide how he will finalise the promises made to soldiers. There are many looking for land and unable to get it. I do not agree with the member for Beverley, who says that land can be had within a reasonable distance of a railway. That may be so in the extreme South-West. The Premier was very near the mark two years ago when he said that we were exhausting our wheat lands and that we had to turn our attention to the South-West. I believe that even every block in Esperance has gone. People are continually coming to me asking me to assist them to get land, but they will not go to the South-West. Land is not available in this State close to existing railways unless we can, by experiments, prove that the light country is capable of being successfully used. I hope no attempts will be made to grow wheat on the light lands until the results of experiments are known. Regarding the soldiers, it seems to me that the Eastern States are not prepared to fulfil the promises made to the men and that they are coming to Western Australia to ask us to take up their burden. In a year or two it should be possible to finalise all the promises made by the previous Government to these soldiers. The Premier has done wonderful work in the settlement of the wheat lands of the State. Land which was considered valueless and too high in price in the district I have the honour to represent is to-day bringing £6 and £6 10s. an acre. That in itself should be sufficient to satisfy the people that the Premier will go on with his ideal in respect of land settlement. I sincerely hope that if it is only a question of spending a few more pounds in the settlement of land, the Government will find the money. The Premier has the confidence of the people and if he occupies a similar position in the next Parliament I trust that the vote will be increased instead of reduced.

Mr. PIESSE (Toodyay) [7.55]: There is one matter that should be taken in hand by the Lands Department and it is that of water supply for the wheat areas. At the present time the Public Works Department attend to it, but seeing that it concerns the development of the wheat areas, it should be administered by the Lands Department. The Premier is aware of the difficulty that is experienced in connection with the conservation of water in the outback areas, and we are told in the Governor's Speech that it is the intention of the Government to construct key

dams. This work, I hope, will be carried out through the Lands Department and not the Public Works Department, because it should be part and parcel of land settlement. There is another question the Premier should reconsider, namely, the purchase of large estates. I join issue with the member for Beverley (Hon. F. T. Broun). I feel that now is the time for the Government to make all the purchases possible of big estates, many of which from time to time have been brought under their notice. Only last Friday I was in the public room of the Lands Department and saw there four young men in quest of land. One of them said he had been there for five weeks seeking Crown land, but land within reasonable distance of a railway was not obtainable. There are several scores of young men ready to take up small holdings if they were only available. On small holdings the initial cost of settlement is much lighter and can be financed much more easily than big farming operations. We are aware of the high cost of machinery and the limited capital at the command of applicants to-day. If the Government bought only one or two big estates—and there are many offering at a reasonable figure—they would be readily taken up. The Buckland Estate is an example. It was cut into blocks that were rather too small, 60 acres, whereas the minimum should be 100 acres. A hundred acres of reasonably rich land is sufficient to enable an industrious man to get a living, and more than a living as times goes on. Several estates were offered to the Government quite recently. I myself brought under the notice of the Premier two estates. One was offered at £5 an acre and was declined, but within a fortnight it was sold at £5 10s. per acre. Since then the price has risen considerably. These estates cannot now be purchased for the price at which they were obtainable 12 months ago. Nothing will be gained by waiting. There are many youths in the city and also sons of farmers in the country ready to take up small holdings if only they were available. They of course cannot buy big estates because they have not the capital. The Government should make a trial by purchasing one or two large estates. The other day the Premier visited Toodyay with the Governor General and was driven through two estates that were purchased a few years ago. They were divided into 200 and 300 acre holdings, and to-day the development on those holdings is a sight to see. The only regrettable feature was that these settlers were not running as many milking cows as one would like to see. These estates, however, prove the value of subdivision. There are many estates along the Avon that could be purchased.

Capt. Carter: How much would that land be worth?

Mr. PIESSE: From £6 to £8 per acre, whereas it was purchased a few years ago for 30s. an acre.

Capt. Carter: What has caused the increase in price?

Mr. PIESSE: Settlement, production and the rise in land values. The McIntosh estate was under offer to the Government for years at £4 or £4 10s. per acre. A richer property could not be found. Mr. Gooch, since deceased, purchased the property for a stud farm. It is as fine an agricultural proposition as one could wish to own. There are other suitable estates offering to-day, and if they were subdivided, any capable man could take up a holding. It is regrettable that men ready to take up small holdings and possessed of sufficient capital to develop them have not an opportunity to do so.

The Premier: They have.

Mr. PIESSE: I do not know where they could purchase a small holding in the Avon Valley at even £8 an acre.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Put on a tax and the price will come down.

Mr. PIESSE: I do not hold with that view. How could we discriminate between one holding and another? In many instances the unimproved value is £5 or £6 an acre. The Premier should purchase some of the estates at present under offer.

Hon. M. F. TROY (Mt. Magnet) [8.5]: I was very pleased to hear the remarks of the member for Beverley (Hon. F. T. Brown) as to the necessity for bringing large estates into production. My only regret is that the hon. member has only become converted to that view at the eleventh hour. A little while ago he opposed the principle. I have no objection to a man following the light when he eventually sees it. I am sorry he does not intend to seek re-election, because he has generally shown a sincerity in his advocacy of that which would mean so much to the welfare of the State. I would like to see him returned to the House to support the policy he enunciated to-night. The Premier has been congratulated on the development of the group settlements. While I shall not be a carping critic, this is not the time to offer congratulations on the scheme. Before many years are over, the group settlement business will be a source of great worry to those who are in power. What will happen here is what has happened in connection with other settlements. I hope my prophecy will not prove to be correct, but I am convinced that a number of group settlers will fail and a number will become discontented and leave their holdings. This will occur as soon as the sustenance allowance is cut off. I read in the Press reports of a large number of soldiers who had left the settlements in Queensland, and it was stated that the Queensland Government had failed in settling these men. I went to Queensland, not to gather information for party purposes, but to glean facts for myself. I traversed the whole of the group settlements, spoke to the gentlemen superintending them, and endeavoured to ascertain the facts. The experience there was the same as the experience everywhere else; while the money was being spent, the settlers stayed on the land, but when the time came

for them to depend upon their own efforts many of them became disheartened and abandoned their holdings. The fault was not attributable to the Government. In my opinion, the Government had done too much for them. When the Government lay themselves out to provide special conditions for settlers and do not insist upon the settler making some sacrifice for themselves the recipients never value what is given to them. I know from experience that one becomes attached to a property, not all ways because of its value, but because of the labour and sacrifice entailed to get it together. There is nothing so effective as adversity to stimulate in a man an appreciation for what he secures. Every man appreciates his property when he has battled to develop it, made sacrifices, exerted all his efforts to build it up and finally has succeeded. It makes him a more thrifty, contented and useful settler than he otherwise would be. But provide a settler with every possible convenience and facility and he does not value what is done for him, because it is obtained too easily. That is what happened in Queensland; that is what will happen here. In Queensland the man who proposed to carry on had his land well worked and looking clean. The man who did not intend to carry on had his land full of weeds and the place going to ruin. I am satisfied that many of our settlers will not make good. A proportion will fail, and I fear that unless they have a ready market and a profitable market, they will fail signally and become discontented as soon as the sustenance allowance is taken from them. Sooner or later the sustenance must be stopped. The State cannot carry on a great number of settlers indefinitely. Members talk of the great concessions secured by the Premier in that the Imperial and Commonwealth Governments each undertook to pay one-third of the interest on £6,000,000 for five years. We have to remember that it is for only five years. The five years will not be long in passing and the State will then have to carry the whole of the burden. The burden of the Commonwealth and of the Imperial Government is a paltry few thousands of pounds of interest, but the main responsibility is ours for all time.

The Premier: It meant a million of money.

Hon. M. F. TROY: But we have to carry the whole of the burden after five years, when these settlers are still struggling. I wish the group settlements well. I know this country must be settled, but I deplore the fact of the Premier putting all his eggs in one basket. The Premier will persist in spending large sums of money to settle people in the South-West, evidently without realising that some day some Government will have a very hard time to carry them on. The same spirit is evinced in connection with the I.A.B. A large number of farmers are still on the board. Members on the Government side have said it was time the I.A.B. was wound up. Year by year, the Government have been

asked to make concession after concession and there is apparently no end to the requests. The Premier said a lot of money was being spent in the wheat belt by way of advances through the Agricultural Bank. That is natural; the producing population is in the wheat belt.

The Premier: Twice as much is being spent there.

Hon. M. F. TROY: There is 30 or 50 times as much population in the wheat belt as in the South-West. The Premier should have experimented with the South-West. He might have started one or two group settlements and given the system a trial and, from the experience thus gained, he could have gone on successfully. But he has put on the land men from the Old Country higgledy-piggledy and we hear they are contented. Naturally they are contented while they are getting sustenance. They may as well be there as anywhere else. Ten shillings a day there is worth 15s. a day in the city. While I realise the disadvantages and disabilities of people who work on the land, I maintain it is good for the people to struggle and make sacrifices, because that which they win will be sweeter in the end. From recollections of my youth I know that people without any help from Agricultural Banks or Industries Assistance Boards won through, and, as the result, became attached to the soil, attached to the rewards of their labour and sacrifices.

Mr. Latham: But the cost of their machinery was much less.

Hon. M. F. TROY: We need not worry much about the cost of machinery on group settlements. There is no more cost for machinery there than on, say, maize crops in the Eastern States. I distrust the cry that the workers have become worse. I was discussing that matter with a man from the East recently, as also the common statement that the sons will never do as much as their fathers did. The fact is that the older generation were simpler in their tastes, and lived for their families and to establish their homes. The only regret I have to-day is that those principles are not universal. In many cases the properties of these old settlers were mortgaged to the storekeeper up to the hilt. Notwithstanding, they struggled through, and their children inherited the properties. A man said to me the other day, "What strikes me about Western Australia is that practically every man who holds land here wants to sell it." To a certain extent that is true, but it will become less and less so as the years go by. The trouble here is that in our country districts we have not the social life that obtains in the country districts of the Eastern States. There the farmers are closer together, and are like a large family, with common ambitions. Where there is a lack of genial companionship and pleasant surroundings, the people will not be so contented.

Mr. J. H. Smith: They have those things on the group settlements.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I hope so. We ought however, to be very careful about the group settlements, and not invest too much money in them right away. We should experiment with them for a start. Meantime we could extend operations in the wheat belt and also increase the production of wool. In the wheat belt a great many settlers have made good. It is my opinion that the wheat belt offers the opportunity for a much greater return than can possibly be secured in the South-West.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Do you say that does not apply in the South-West?

Hon. M. F. TROY: The South-West is not a country which can be developed so quickly as the wheat belt, or with so little capital. No man in his right senses will question that statement.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Is there no opportunity in the South-West?

Hon. M. F. TROY: The hon. member has in his constituency settlers who went there with money, careful men with good properties, but now unable to make a living. There are men in the South-West who cannot sell their fruit to-day.

Mr. J. H. Smith: What are the names.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon. M. F. TROY: Never mind the names.

Mr. J. H. Smith: I know the names.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for Nelson must obey the Chair.

Mr. J. H. Smith: And I will obey the Chair, Sir, but I cannot allow a thing like that to pass.

Hon. M. F. TROY: In the South-West the settler is producing mostly fruit and potatoes, and to-day he cannot get a market for his produce. In particular, the fruit market is in a bad way. We see reports in the Press as to fruitgrowers not being able to obtain a price for their products. Therefore the important thing in a new country like this is that we should produce those things which have a market, and which will bring a price.

Mr. J. H. Smith: What is the price of potatoes to-day?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! If the hon. member does not obey the Chair, I shall have to compel him to do so.

Hon. M. F. TROY: We ought not to be spending our money on the production of things for which there is no market. The great thing for this country is to get as much money as possible into it. The commodities which sell to-day are wool and wheat, particularly wool.

Mr. Angelo: The world will come and buy wool.

Mr. Underwood: And one can get rid of a lot of butter and bacon.

Hon. M. F. TROY: Anyhow, the group settlers will not be producing those things for years to come. There is a large area in the eastern wheat belt where, by the judicious expenditure of a fair amount of money, the Government could bring into this country millions of pounds by encouraging settlers

to grow sheep. There is always a good price for wool, and that is particularly so to-day. We ought to be reaching out for that trade. The wheat belt of this country carries very few sheep, the reason being, I understand, that there is no fencing and that the settlers are afraid of wild dogs. Would not the judicious expenditure of money to enable the wheat belt to carry a million sheep be more advantageous than the expenditure of £500,000 in the South-West? I cannot understand why that important principle is absolutely neglected. And the same thing applies throughout the agricultural portion of the State. The absence of water, the absence of fencing, and the depredations of wild dogs, render it quite impossible for settlers to carry on an industry which means millions of pounds for Western Australia. The member for Toodyay (Mr. Piesse) has on more than one occasion joined me in stressing the absolute necessity for water supply in country districts. I understand that the Government policy is to provide a number of key dams, which, in the opinion of Ministers, will solve the water shortage. I say a key dam here and another 20 miles away will not overcome the difficulty. It is surprising to me that the Government have not a definite policy of water supply. We know that the Railway Department have machinery by which they excavate a number of dams in the country every year. The Government should devise a plan for the employment of similar machinery in excavating dams or tanks on private properties at a very reasonable cost. To-day it costs the settler from 1s. 2d. to 2s. per cubic yard to sink a dam. He is so limited in regard to money that he is unable to put down a tank or excavate a dam which would tide him over a dry spell. I contend that the Government could excavate dams and tanks at 1s. per cubic yard. It is useless for departmental lecturers to go around the country advising farmers to fallow, because after the fallowing there are as many weeds as ever on the land. This ought to be fed over by stock, but the settlers cannot carry stock because they have not the necessary water supply. Therefore I suggest the Government should organise a travelling party to go from farm to farm excavating dams at a cost of 1s. per cubic yard. Thus the settler would obtain for £200 a dam of twice the capacity that he can get to-day for such a sum. Again, it is said that a great many new settlers cannot get land. That is so, as I know from experience. We are told that the land is all occupied. I say it is not. Some is occupied, but there is a defect in the administration of the Lands Department inasmuch as no proper inspection is made to ascertain whether the necessary improvements are effected on C.P. lands or not. I know of a case where country has been held practically unimproved by a settler for 12 years, whereas all the adjoining settlers made great improvements. The settler in question should have cleared 500 acres, but I guarantee that he has not cleared 100

acres. Yet he was allowed to draw on the Agricultural Bank up to £700 or £800. Even the land that he has cleared is becoming overgrown with suckers again. Where is the inspection? Who is responsible? Why do not the Agricultural Bank take action? Why is the holder allowed to retain this land to the detriment of others who want it, and also to the detriment of his neighbours?

The Premier: Where is this land?

Hon. M. F. TROY: I can tell the Premier. I was in the department on one occasion and saw a minute wherein an officer advised that a certain property should be handed over to a certain man. He asked me, "Do you know the property?" I said, "Yes, and I am utterly surprised about this. It is not my business, but I will say now that if you grant that property to that person I will mention the matter in Parliament, because it will be an absolute scandal." That same person has his own property now on the market for sale. I cannot understand how on earth that officer could have reported that this man was a satisfactory man to have the property. I will tell the Premier all about it in confidence. I understand the officer was well advised not to fall into the error he was about to make. I know of a number of properties in similar circumstances, instances of people holding on to land without making any improvements, and without being subjected to inspection. Seven or eight years ago an officer came to my place to inspect the improvements. Since then I have not seen an inspector up there. If the department had a rigorous policy of inspection, it would be found there is a lot of land which should be in the hands of new settlers.

Mr. Latham: Your district must be an exception. I have seen none of this.

Mr. Davies: Do you mean inspection in respect of advances made?

Hon. M. F. TROY: No, the inspection of improvements. I have had numerous letters about this.

Mr. Latham: One officer in the Lands Department deals exclusively with inspections.

Hon. M. F. TROY: There ought to be a dozen officers to look after it.

Mr. Latham: But they are not required.

Hon. M. F. TROY: They are required. I am afraid some members of Parliament are largely responsible for the fact that no inspection is made. I am afraid to say what I have been told about pressure brought to bear on departmental officers to induce them to refrain from forfeiting. I could place 200 settlers within 100 miles of Geraldton, where they would do better than they could anywhere in the South-West. I could show the Premier where he could place 200 settlers and, as I say, they would win through in half the time required for success in the South-West. I would settle those men on grazing areas where water is immediately available and where sheep can be carried in the first year. I would not for a moment

advocate for my own glorification anything that might impose hardship on anybody, but I know that we can settle hundreds of families on grazing areas, provided the land be given at a reasonable price.

Mr. Latham: Do you mean sandplain?

Hon. M. F. TROY: No, sandplain will not carry stock all the year round. It is good only as a stand-by when one has better land also. I do not care whether the land be freehold or leasehold—indeed freehold is largely a bugbear. Where the Government have power of taxation, no man can say his land is freehold. What we call freehold is not freehold. I would rather have the land leasehold, because the first principle is to give the people the land and to insist that they shall make use of it. I would not impose burdens in the shape of heavy rentals or repayments, but I would insist upon improvements. The trouble with group settlement is going to be the marketing. All this settlement will undoubtedly result in increased production, but I want to know what the Government propose to do in respect of markets; what the people are going to produce, and when it is produced, what prices are they to get. Do the Government propose to organise any markets? You, Mr. Stubbs, and others have referred to the markets of the far East for Western Australian products. What scheme have the Government in mind to secure those markets?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The markets at Java are of no use to us.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I understood they would be. At all events I should like to know what the Government propose. We cannot rely upon private enterprise, because it has been proved to be dishonest. Hon. members returning from visits abroad have told us how Australian trade has been ruined in the Far East by unscrupulous Australian merchants. The newspapers have deplored it. The flour market in South Africa was ruined by dishonest merchants, and the Commonwealth Government had to pay some £150,000 in compensation. Private enterprise has done more than anything else to ruin the markets for us. The Chamber of Commerce denounce State enterprise, but what alternative can they offer if they cannot insist upon strict morality and honesty in their own members? The Government ought to organise markets abroad for Western Australian products. There is a ready market for wheat and wool, although one of those commodities is bringing less this year than it did last year. If the Premier has come to the conclusion that there is no more land for settlement in this State, it is a bad lookout for Western Australia. We are advertising throughout the world that our State is bigger than many European countries combined. Yet we are now told that a young man seeking land has no opportunity in this State.

The Premier: Oh, no!

Hon. M. F. TROY: We are told that there is no more land in the wheat belt.

Mr. Willecock: The wheat belt is fully developed.

Hon. M. F. TROY: No, it is not. I give credit to the Premier for his activities in the development of the wheat belt, but he cannot claim the whole of the credit. The farmers themselves deserve a lot of it. Members on this side have kept settlement going and pushed it on, and some of them have accepted part of the burden of sticking to the land and persevering. The wheat belt settlers have succeeded, largely because during the past few years they have obtained high prices for their products. In one year 8s. 6d. per bushel was paid for wheat, in another year 7s., and again 6s. 3d. But we are not going to get 8s. 6d. again for quite a long time to come, and therefore we shall have to depend on some other product to make up the deficiency. As I have said, a Government looking ahead should be seeking to encourage production by getting the world's price for our producers. I wish the Premier every success in respect of group settlement, but the time is not yet to offer congratulations. The time is coming when the State will be called upon to bear a great burden. Some Ministry of the future will be the Ministry upon which will depend the success or failure of group settlement. It is easy to borrow money and spend it; the difficulty will come when we have to pay interest and make return of the principal.

Mr. Davies: The same thing was said in regard to the settlement of the wheat belt.

Hon. M. F. TROY: It was not said with regard to the wheat belt. The wheat belt has prospered because the wheat settlers received good prices soon after the war concluded. Indeed, there never had been such high prices for wheat. People made large sums of money on the wheat belt, but that time has now passed. The wheatgrower, including the returned soldier, has a struggle in front of him. If the settlers are going to rely upon wheat alone in order to make good, they will fail. They must take up special lines and the Government must encourage them to do so. They must grow produce that will command a ready sale and good prices. Abundant water supplies are required in the country and facilities for carrying sheep and other stock.

Mr. Underwood: That is the duty of the squatter. He helps himself.

Hon. M. F. TROY: The squatter starts off first with the great encouragement of cheap land. He is not concerned about freehold. He pays from 5s. to 10s. per 1,000 acres as rent. The basis of all successful settlement is cheap land.

Mr. Latham: It is cheap enough here.

Mr. Davies: The group settlers get their land for nothing.

Hon. M. F. TROY: A settler has to pay £50 a year rent for his land in the initial stages. He also has to pay interest on capital invested, road board and vermin rates, and buy machinery at heavy cost. I would have the settler given cheap land, I do not say freehold, but a cheap tenure of land on con-

dition that he made use of it, and was deprived of it if he failed to do so.

[Mr. Angelo took the Chair.]

Mr. MONEY (Bunbury) [§47]: Under this vote we have the most important items on the Estimates. They contain the foundations of the most important industry in Western Australia. Many errors have been committed in the past in the selection of land, and in the survey of roads along ill-chosen routes. These roads are required to save the cost of transport and the cost of developing the land. Undoubtedly these errors have cost Western Australia many hundreds of thousands of pounds. It was the system in the past to survey roads irrespective of the contour of the land or the grades of the country. I have seen roads surveyed over impassable hills and through the middle of swamps. It is the height of absurdity and the height of financial folly to do such things. This is a very important division of the Estimates, inasmuch as the responsibility of deciding where settlement shall take place and the question of transport to the railways rests with the Department of Lands and Surveys. It is admitted that where there has been agricultural depression the holdings invariably become larger. The holdings that have suffered most have been the small holdings. That is a matter of great concern in deciding the area of the blocks in the future. In the eighties in the Old Country there was an agricultural depression, and the holdings all became larger. It requires a plant to farm, and the plant should be running at its full capacity in order to give the most economical results. The same principle applies to farming as to commerce. The tendency in commerce is to amalgamate and reduce the overhead charges. It is a surprise to me to know that Labour at Home is moving for larger holdings of land.

Mr. Underwood: They own the lot, about a dozen or so of them.

Mr. MONEY: They say that the farming business will not carry too much in the way of overhead charges. In the Old Country it is the 2,000-acre farm that can stand the stress of depression, not the 200-acre farm. One man can manage 2,000 acres. It is better to have one man running 2,000 acres than to have 20 men managing 20 farms.

Mr. Underwood: He cannot farm 2,000 acres alone.

Mr. MONEY: He can. The best farms in the Old Country are the 2,000 acre farms, and the best farmers and managers are those controlling the 2,000 acres. It is not economical to give a man a small portion of land and tell him to farm it as if it were 2,000 acres. When he has to go to the expense of reapers and binders, proper ploughs, drills, cultivators, and the whole plant for farming he should be given an area of land that will enable him to use that power to the fullest extent.

Mr. Underwood: Do you think you can put 2,000 acres in with one drill? You could not do it with three drills.

Mr. MONEY: It is our duty to think of the competition our settlers will have to contend with in the future. The British farmer has at his door the markets of the world. He has no difficulties in the matter of transporting his products, and yet land in the Old Country is going back to grass and grazing.

Mr. Wilson: He has to pay too much rent for his land, up to £5 an acre per annum.

Mr. MONEY: I could buy for £25 an acre in the Old Country not long ago.

Mr. Wilson: I could take you to places where they have to pay nearly that much in rent per annum.

Mr. MONEY: During the last two years land in the Old Country has become a drug on the market, unsaleable and looked upon as an encumbrance. Two or three years before it was very high in value, but it has gone down with a thud and is going out of cultivation.

Mr. Underwood: Let it go.

Mr. MONEY: It behoves us to consider this question of the size of blocks. I hope that the attention of the Government will be turned to it. There has been a Royal Commission dealing with soldier settlement. I have perused their report in order to find out what their recommendations were, and if there was anything in them to serve as a guide in the future survey of blocks. Recently I personally inspected land occupied by returned soldiers and I regret to say that, notwithstanding all the expressions of opinion given in this House as to the necessity for roads and draining, no attention appears to have been paid to the question by the Commission. I do not know who is to blame, but there is an entire absence of reference to the very essentials of success, namely, good means of transport and well drained roads. I do not know whether this is due to the fact that on the Commission there were members who were not experienced in the South-West, but they are silent as to these essentials of success in land settlement.

Mr. Wilson: What are they?

Mr. MONEY: The Trigwell estate has been drained, but the drains are constructed in a straight line across the blocks on the highest part, and the land cannot be drained at all.

Mr. Marshall: Were you looking through your spectacles?

Mr. MONEY: I found the roads were waterlogged. The first step in road construction is draining. If the roads are formed of cultivable soil and not properly made, they become waterlogged. It would have been better to have left the track in its original state of solidity, instead of stirring it up and leaving it in that condition. There was a place where one could not walk across, because of the water. There was no drainage to take the water away. I have promised to bring these important essentials before members so that errors of that kind may be prevented in the future.

Mr. Wilson: Why did you not bring that before the Commission? No settler did.

Mr. MONEY: I take it a Commission visits the land and can see things for itself. These essentials have so often been stressed here in this Chamber. If the member for Collie (Mr. Wilson) wants information on this subject, I can only refer him to the debates. I have generally excused myself for repeating here time and time again the necessity for draining the land in the South-West, and for good roads. Surely the hon. member does not want me to swear to that evidence before a Commission, because it has been so often stated here. Before members visited the South-West and the Trigwell estate, I spoke for 20 minutes in this Chamber on these two essentials. Without them it is impossible for a man to be successful. To be successful a man must as soon as possible become independent and self-contained. Instead of doing a lot of costly clearing it would be ten thousand times better for the Government to scrub and ringbark the land, probably dise it, and use that great gift of God to Western Australia, subterranean clover. This fodder does well in the South-West, and with a little top dressing it will supply food for dairy herds and enable the settlers to get a weekly income from their holdings. They can also keep pigs and poultry, and become self-contained very rapidly. That is the first step. It is a pity that so much money has been spent in costly clearing. If these holdings are going to be turned into agricultural farms, big plants will be required. By scrubbing, ringbarking and pasturing the land, all that heavy overhead charge—interest and sinking fund on the depreciated capital—could have been avoided. If they would only proceed on economical lines they would be a bit more successful.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I do not think you would provide capital under those conditions.

Mr. STUBBS (Wagin) [9.1]: I do not propose to take up much of the time of the Committee in speaking to this vote. There are one or two points regarding land settlement that may be of interest to hon. members. The Government have embarked upon a group settlement policy in the South-West. I subscribe to that policy, but I maintain that it is going to be a very costly move and that in some instances it will prove more costly to the State than many hon. members realise. After having had considerable experience in Gippsland, Victoria, with land similar to ours in the South-West, I say without fear of contradiction, that what happened to the settlers in the Victorian areas will happen here, as sure as the sun will rise to-morrow morning. It will take years for the best production to be obtained from group settlements in the South-West. It took a great number of years to sweeten the land in Gippsland and its wealth was produced by the grandchildren of those who took up the holdings originally. The same thing will happen in Western Australia as happened in Gippsland.

Mr. Underwood: No, it will not.

Mr. STUBBS: I will illustrate to the House one way in which I think the Government would be wise in effecting some alterations. I speak from the years of experience I have had in the Great Southern. If the Government were to establish one or two groups in the Great Southern, I guarantee that they would produce twice as much in twelve months as group settlements in the South-West.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You have not the soil in the Great Southern that is procurable in the South-West.

Mr. STUBBS: People interested in wool buying from all over the world visit Western Australia, and I presume hon. members know that Western Australian wool has brought top prices in the market during the past few years. Our wool has held its own with the clips from much older established holdings in the Eastern States. Wool buyers state that they do not wish any better wool than that grown in the Great Southern. I can prove my statement if necessary, that properties—I am not holding up any particular property for consideration—can be bought to-day for £2 an acre or less, holdings that are highly improved, which will return 12½ per cent. on the money invested, from the very inception. From these properties excellent wool is procurable and that wool grows on the back of the sheep while the settler's family is asleep. If the people go in for side lines such as cows and pigs, they will earn three times as much money as they can on the group settlements in the South-West. I am sure I am right in making that statement. I do not wish to quarrel with the Premier regarding his group settlement policy. I believe, however, that it will prove costly and that if people were induced to settle in the Great Southern, they could produce wealth that would counterbalance the losses that will be made in the South-West.

Hon. M. F. Troy: They will carry the burden.

Mr. Underwood: We will be expected to pay something in the North too.

Mr. STUBBS: There is an unlimited demand for wool and we can produce the required article and secure good prices. I agree with the member for Beverley (Hon. F. T. Broun) that experience in the Beverley district and other centres has shown that wheat growing is not satisfactory. Wheat farmers are beginning to turn towards stock and grazing. Wheat takes a considerable amount of humus out of the soil and in the districts east and west of the Great Southern sheep and cattle will pay better than wheat. When one goes 20 miles east of the Great Southern, wheat grows fairly well, but the farmers who have done well in localities such as Dumbleyung have obtained results by mixed farming. The sheep always pay the rent. I urge the Premier to take this matter in hand while it is not too late. Many of these properties can be secured at a reasonable price to-day,

and, as the member for Beverley has already pointed out, they are increasing in value. It will be a question of only a few years when land that can be purchased for £2 an acre now, will be purchased for £5 or £6 an acre. Why not take advantage of the price offering now to procure this land?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: What is the advantage of buying people out to put other people on? We should tax them and make them give up the land if they will not work it.

Mr. STUBBS: Why should one man have 25,000 acres of land if that area can carry 25 families? More particularly may this be asked if the owner is willing to let the Government have the land at less than £2 an acre.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: If the man will not use it he should get off it.

Mr. STUBBS: This land is within eight miles of a railway. If 25 settlers can be placed on that highly improved property, the Government should seriously consider the matter. I understand it can be bought on the walk in, walk out basis with thousands of sheep already on it, and that it can be procured at a reasonable rate.

Hon. M. F. Troy: It is a cheap proposition.

Mr. STUBBS: I leave it to hon. members to say if I am right or wrong in advising the Government to take advantage of this opportunity to secure such a property and settle men there who will pay interest from the very jump. Their success will be assured.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We have had experience in the past of that sort of thing. Interest amounting to £281,000 is unpaid on properties bought on the walk in, walk out basis.

Mr. A. Thomson: There are not too many of the description the member for Wagin speaks of.

Mr. STUBBS: If the member for North-East Fremantle could spare a week end to visit the Great Southern and go to Wagin, Katanning, Narrogin, or Pingelly—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I have been all round those parts.

Mr. STUBBS: —he could see the properties that I have mentioned, and if he were to do that, it would satisfy him that such properties are cheap. If eight or 10 families can be put on a holding where only one is settled now, without burdening the State financially in the transaction, it should be done. It will be five years before interest is paid back respecting some of the group settlements in the South-West now.

The Premier: Many in the Great Southern have not paid any interest yet.

Mr. STUBBS: If the Government stand behind the man who does not pay anything and do not take steps to replace him with someone more energetic, that is the fault of the Government.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Not altogether. I was on the select committee inquiring into the affairs of the Industries Assistance Board, and I know something about the matter.

Mr. A. Thomson: You would not condemn a whole district because of one or two?

Mr. STUBBS: Men are on the Industries Assistance Board who have no right to be there. They have lived on the country for years and they have no intention of getting away from the board so long as a sympathetic Government will dole out money to them year after year. This sort of thing destroys the incentive of men who are prepared to slave in order to pay their dues when they see that others can sit back and receive doles from the Industries Assistance Board. Such a practice is doing more injury than good to the farmers. It is hampering land settlement more than anything else. I hope the Government scheme for the development of the South-West will be a success. I am sure the Premier has been actuated by a desire to have Western Australia settled with a white population, and I hope his wishes regarding the success of that venture will be realised. We have sent enormous sums of money each year to the Eastern States for cheese, butter, and bacon. It is time that the drift ceased. We have land here capable of producing all we require in dairy produce, but we have not the people to enable us to cope with our requirements and thus stop the enormous drift of money to the Eastern States. I hope production will increase and that in a very short time we shall see the importation of butter, cheese, and bacon from the Eastern States ended, and see the State self-contained regarding those commodities. There is any amount of country in the Great Southern that will produce far more wealth in 12 months than many of these group settlements in the South-West, which are costing from £16 to £20 to partially clear. However, I wish the Premier success in his scheme. It will, I am sure, be a costly one to this State.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam—in reply) [9.13]: I have listened to the discussion on these Estimates with a great deal of interest. Naturally I expected there would be considerable discussion because of the policy of land settlement.

Hon. M. F. Troy: That is where the money is going, and that is what we want to know about.

The PREMIER: I think I heard the hon. member whisper a little while ago about putting more money into land settlement. During his speech the member for Mt. Magnet (Hon. M. F. Troy) said there were large areas in the wheat belt that could be secured and improved and into which we could put our money.

Hon. M. F. Troy: I said that more money could be put into land settlement.

The PREMIER: I am afraid the hon. member does not know much about group settlements in this State. I hope he will go among them and find out what is happening.

Hon. M. F. Troy: When you were working in a bank, I was on group settlements comprising from 30 acres to 100 acres per farm.

The PREMIER: Where?

Hon. M. F. Troy: In the Eastern States. I have seen more group settlements than you have.

The PREMIER: The hon. member lived all his time in a group settlement! He came here when he was still a youth, but he knows all about group settlements! We are putting money into the wheat belt. We spent twice as much there last year as we spent in the South-West, although we had previously spent millions in the wheat belt. No less a sum than £1,500,000 was authorised for work in the wheat belt, work that has not yet been done. I told the House we expected to double the wheat production. To-day we are expecting to get back our first money for the investment we are now facing. It was part of the scheme. I think I also said something about stocking the wheat land.

Hon. M. F. Troy: I did not hear that. I think you thought you said it.

The PREMIER: No, I have said it several times. We can rely on a million sheep when the farmers can get fencing wire. During the war it was not procurable, and it is not very cheap to-day. When it comes to fencing a thousand farms, it is a big question. It is strange to hear members talking of markets. A little more than two years ago everybody said that wool was down and out; that we should never again get a decent price for it. Yet within three months wool was higher than ever before. It is still maintaining its price. No one can tell what is going to happen when it comes to markets. For the South-West a market in Western Australia is assured up to £2,000,000. That will take a bit of catching up. I believe with the member for Wagin (Mr. Stubbs), it is high time we endeavoured to feed ourselves, since we are sending £2,000,000 cash out of the State year after year for commodities that our own people should be producing.

Mr. A. Thomson: We have tried a jam factory.

The PREMIER: And butter factories and other factories. Of course, everything in Western Australia is bad, and nothing good can happen. If that really be so, we had better get somewhere else, rather than stay in such a poor, uninviting State.

Mr. A. Thomson: I am referring to the dumping of Eastern States goods.

Hon. P. Collier: They had to spend a lot of money in Victoria to establish the butter industry.

The PREMIER: Of course so. To-day our own people are getting 1s. 6d. at the butter factory. As to the dumping of Eastern goods in Western Australia, it will go on until we can produce for ourselves in a sufficiently large way.

Hon. M. F. Troy: And as good a product as that of the Eastern States.

The PREMIER: Yes. The trouble is we manufacture in so small a way. Our jam factory is small and, naturally, the bigger factories of the East can compete against us. In helping with canned fruits the Federal Government have lost £500,000. They en-

deavoured to assist the grower in marketing. After all, our own jam factory has done something. If we could get it going in a decent way it would hold its own. The people are willing to buy a local product, so long as it is of good quality. I was pleased to hear the member for Beverley (Hon. F. T. Broun) speak on group settlement as he did. Of course, he had a hand in starting the work. He is not only an honest man, but an experienced man living on the land, and knowing the game. He is an astonishingly honest man, and is not actuated by feelings for or against, but merely takes the position as it is, and deals with it. He was supported by the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo), and again by the member for York (Mr. Latham). I am glad to hear a good word spoken for any part of Western Australia. It is always useful to the country, and it does not do the harm that unfair criticism does. Incidentally, this country is greatly indebted to some of its critics. The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) objected to the form in which the Estimates are submitted, pointing out that there is no vote for the Agricultural Bank, for the Soldier Settlement Scheme, or for the Industries Assistance Board. Those departments are all controlled by statute, and their expenditure provided under statute. There is no reason why the items appearing on the Estimates should be there, except that they have always been there and if they were taken off it would lead to a great deal of discussion. The hon. member knows more about the reason for this than does anybody else. The member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith) said young men in the South-West could not get land. There is a good deal of land open in the South-West, some 300 blocks, and, as a matter of fact, 246 more are being thrown open now. The country is there, and if our own people want land they can get it. It has seemed strange to me, and not a little flattering, to find men who have been many years in the country wanting land when I happen to be in office. There has been a great demand for land, and the trouble has been to get it surveyed. Just now, people are coming from the East and from the goldfields seeking land. A great deal is wanted, and we are throwing it open every week. A good deal is always available. As a matter of fact, a large area of land at Esperance is ready now. The member for Katanning (Mr. A. Thomson) referred to the purchase of land at Katanning, land offered to the Government on two or three occasions. The Viticultural Board have the matter in hand.

Mr. A. Thomson: But they did not inspect the land.

The PREMIER: It has been inspected.

Mr. A. Thomson: Not for viticulture.

The PREMIER: The board say they want to be certain that land so far south will be suitable in view of the drying and other purposes, and that they will not recommend the purchase until they have decided that the land is suitable.

Mr. A. Thomson: The price is now £4 per acre, whereas it was £3.

The PREMIER: We do not want it even at £3, unless it be vine land.

Mr. A. Thomson: Some 56 acres is planted now.

The PREMIER: I am glad to hear that somebody is planting without Government assistance. We cannot find money for all the land. Vines are under a cloud for the moment, and so we cannot induce people to do much planting. The hon. member mentioned one or two cases of delay. I am sorry that in one instance there was a delay of four months which ought not to have occurred. Of course there must be some delay. These are two genuine cases out of about 150,000 leases. It does not mean that everything is wrong.

Hon. P. Collier: Still, that is rather a high percentage.

The PREMIER: In respect of the land said to have been priced at 9s. 6d., it was priced at 9s. 6d., but subject to a reduction to 4s. 6d. when the poison was cleared.

Mr. A. Thomson: But you will not give them any advance on it.

The PREMIER: Of course not.

Mr. A. Thomson: Then the land is of no value.

The PREMIER: What a stupid remark to make!

Mr. A. Thomson: The bank says it is not of any value.

The PREMIER: Nothing of the sort. Of course, it would have been a good thing for the State if the land had been uniform throughout, if there had been no bad patches. Then it would have been easy to cut it up into squares and get the bank to say, "Yes, take any of the land, and we will advance on it." But no great area of land can be uniform. It is one thing to sell the land, but quite another thing when it comes to advancing against it. There is often a vast difference between two blocks of land. We cannot guarantee that the bank will advance against all land thrown open. The bank is under special statute, and controlled by a board. Their duty is quite clear. It would be very good if we could have all blocks marked by the bank, as was done some years ago. But at that time we were dealing with specially good land. It would be impossible to observe that system year after year.

Mr. A. Thomson: Do you think if the Lands Department valued the land at 9s. 6d. per acre they ought not to advance £75 for dam sinking?

The PREMIER: I should say that unless the land were fenced and some of the poison eradicated, it would be a very foolish thing to advance anything against it, for certainly it could not carry stock. It can not be said that the bank must advance against any and all land.

Mr. A. Thomson: But you are advancing over £1,000 on group settlement land without improvements. These people have been 25 years in the district, yet they cannot get assistance.

The PREMIER: Hundreds of applicants have been refused by the bank and hundreds of others should have been refused. It is of no use advancing on unsuitable land. I admit there was delay in one case.

Mr. A. Thomson: Twelve months delay! That is all!

The PREMIER: I do not think it was quite so long as that.

Mr. A. Thomson: From the 6th October to the 18th August. Split the difference.

The PREMIER: I shall split no difference with the hon. member.

Mr. A. Thomson: I stated facts.

The PREMIER: The member for West Perth (Mrs. Cowan) asked about the group settlement shacks. I think she has been wrongly informed. Most of the temporary homes of people in the South-West are fairly comfortable, running 20 x 10ft., and consisting of two or three rooms. On the Peel estate a tent as well as one temporary room is provided, but the houses are being erected on the Peel estate at the rate of about one a day. If the hon. member visited a group—

Mrs. Cowan: I am prepared to go at any time.

The PREMIER: The hon. member may do so. The member for Geraldton (Mr. Willcock) admitted that he had doubted the wisdom of settling the wheat belt and was good enough to say that he had been wrong. Now he objects to South-West settlement. Will he again admit a mistake? We have heard a lot about the South-West. We have been told the land is sour and will not grow things. As a matter of fact it is growing things. Experiments have been made there over the last 80 years. We know precisely what the South-West will produce. We know what the rainfall is; we know that at Pemberton the rainfall is 61 inches a year, that there is rain every month in the year, that crops grow all the year round, and that the settlers get three crops a year. There is no need for experiment to establish that. Land that has only just been cleared is growing crops. I suppose it ought to be sour because some people say so. I do not know why it is not sour; I can only regret that so many people are disappointed because it is growing good crops from the first ploughing. This must be a serious disappointment to many people, but the fact remains that some of the settlers are growing crops under the trees from the very day they go on to the blocks and before any work at all is done. They are growing vegetables and selling them to other people. The land is not sour; it is capable of producing very quickly. There is no need for me to speak at length on the question now as we shall have to deal with it again when considering the Loan Estimates. I wish to deal with the remarks of the member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) because he represents a district in which we have settled 900 people. I confess to approaching this subject more in sorrow than in anger. The hon. member could

hardly criticise the group settlers because they represent 1,800 votes, but he could criticise me; I have not a vote there at all.

Mr. A. Thomson: That is an ungenerous remark.

The PREMIER: It is perfectly true and would apply to the hon. member as well. While the member for Sussex criticised the groups, I do not think he realised this.

Hon. P. Collier: That was a little too deep for him.

The PREMIER: He said a special Minister should be appointed for this work. In such a scheme we must select the best men for the work. The men that are to do the work should certainly not be in a Minister's chair. It is really a multiplicity of one small department. When the details are worked out and the organisation is in full swing, there should be no trouble. We have a wide choice of suitable men and I consider splendid work is being done. The way in which the officers have done the work is really wonderful. It is a great task to settle 1,500 men on the land under the conditions that obtain. Mr. McLarty, Mr. Richardson and others connected with the scheme have done magnificently. I do not blame the member for Sussex for not understanding the detail work. Members of the House cannot be held responsible for originating this scheme, and I see no reason why they should be held responsible. I acknowledge the great assistance that members on both sides of the House have rendered, but I do not think we can hold them responsible. I am willing to take the responsibility for all the work under my control. The hon. member claimed that he had the scheme stowed away in his brain; I think he said he originated it. Others have said the same thing. If they only meant it I should be glad. If they said, "This is my scheme; it is all mine; I stand by it," I would say, "Thank God, so long as you stand by the baby of your creation." But if anything goes wrong, they will not stand by it. They want all the credit while things are going right. I do not know whether the hon. member had such a scheme in mind. Perhaps it was well established in his mind, but evidently he was at a loss for words to give expression to his ideas.

Hon. P. Collier: It was beyond him to mature it.

The PREMIER: All that he wanted was words to express his ideas, but perhaps I should applaud the hon. member.

Words are like leaves,

And where they most abound

Much fruit of sense is seldom found.

If he had not words to give expression to his thoughts—

Hon. P. Collier: Good Heavens! He is never short of words here.

The PREMIER: Perhaps I should applaud him because, while he conceived this wonderful idea, we heard nothing of it.

Mr. A. Thomson: We must congratulate you on your generous applause.

The PREMIER: If the hon. member had originated the scheme, he could have sent me "Please explains" as to why I was not carrying out the scheme as he desired; as to why I did not make roads, and questions of that sort. He said the clearing should be done by experienced men and not by the group settlers. That is a strange echo of words that have been uttered by other people. I do not think the hon. member realises that this is the way to the real development of the South-West. If he demands that every acre shall be cleared by men of experience in clearing that class of country, little land will be cleared because there are no men who have had much experience in clearing in the South-West. There are a few, but they are busily working for other people, and no great area could be cleared under those conditions. That argument really would operate in the direction of stopping development in the South-West. The work is being done to-day by willing men, working under experienced men, and I think they are doing wonderful work. I do not know that we could get more experienced men than these men are after they have had a year or two on the land. As to markets, these settlers will have markets overseas after they have supplied the local market. New Zealand every year sends away millions of pounds worth of meat, butter, and such like produce, and these lines will be grown in the South-West. There is not another country in the world that would hold unused and unoccupied a territory such as our South-West. It has magnificent soil and climate; everything is ready for the settlement of men with their families. It is not right that it should remain longer unused and, what is more, we cannot afford to keep it unused. There is nothing before us but this work of development. We must people this country. It is there we can provide homes for thousands of people coming from the Old Land. The member for Katanning (Mr. A. Thomson) spoke of the development of the South-West, particularly the Nornalup country.

Mr. A. Thomson: It is the way it is being conducted that I am against. I am still in favour of developing the South-West.

The PREMIER: In your own way.

Mr. A. Thomson: That may be as good as the Premier's way.

The PREMIER: It is easy to give the State lip service, but it is quite another matter to do the work. To tackle the actual work is not quite so easy as to talk against it. I hope the Committee will realise that the work done under our officials is being efficiently done. If there are officials at the head of the department that know less of this work than the member for Katanning, I do not know them. All I know is we have the best men we can get. These officials know their work and are carrying it out very well indeed. They have done wonders, and probably I am as well able as is the hon.

member to judge of work when it comes to farming. It was very ungenerous of him to talk about the work of the officials when he knows nothing about it. I do not deny the value of the Great Southern lands. I think we shall be able to settle a great many people there, and I believe it will be a great fruit-growing centre apart from the great wool-producing district it undoubtedly is.

Vote put and passed.

Votes—*Treasury*, £14,545; *Audit*, £12,293; *Compassionate allowances*, £1,249—agreed to.

Vote—*Government Savings Bank*, £33,307:

Mr. A. THOMSON: Judging by the recent prosecutions in connection with the Savings Bank, things are not being managed there as they ought to be. The Premier should make a statement on the subject.

The Premier: I will answer anything you want to know about it.

Mr. A. THOMSON: We should know whether some different system is being brought into existence, so that these losses shall not occur again. The present system is no credit to those concerned. If the Audit Department can permit such things to go on, one shudders at what must be happening in other departments.

The PREMIER: The hon. member is not justified in making those remarks. The system is a good one, the same as is employed in other savings banks. No system will prevent a bank being robbed. It is unfortunate there has been a loss, but it is a very small one compared with the turnover. In New South Wales and South Australia the savings banks lost through fraud in much the same way as we did. It is not possible to have a system that is perfect. Private banks are sometimes robbed. The hon. member need have no doubt about the system, or about the care that is taken by the officials to safeguard the people's money.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Are the salaries paid to officers of the savings bank fixed by the appeal board?

The Premier: Yes.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The general manager receives £552 and the accountant £408. What wonderful salaries for the leading officials of the savings bank!

The Premier: I agree with you.

Hon. P. Collier: They are ridiculous.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If the Government want good men they should pay them good salaries.

The Premier: These are very good men.

Mrs. COWAN: The salaries paid to these officials are too low. It is astonishing to note the extreme youthfulness of the clerks employed in the Perth office as compared with those who were employed some time ago. I wonder if this is in pursuance of some special policy, and if youthful clerks are being employed at a lower rate than older and more experienced men. I do not know whether this is in the interests of the country, or of the persons concerned. I would rather see

better salaries given to fewer and more experienced officials.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The salaries paid to the branch managers are particularly low.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They are all the same.

Mr. WILLCOCK: These officials occupy responsible positions, and it is time Parliament set itself out to adequately recompense them.

The Premier: They have been given the appeal board.

Mr. WILLCOCK: It should not be necessary to make a man appeal in order to secure a decent salary. The Government should make up the Estimates so as to show that these positions are worth so much.

The Premier: They also have a Public Service Commissioner.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The Government can recompense officials if they think fit without reference to the Public Service Commissioner. The manager of the Geraldton branch is performing very useful work, but is receiving only £312 a year.

Item, *Branches and Agencies Guarantee Fund*, £200:

Mr. A. THOMSON: Last year's expenditure under this item was £6,394, and this year it is only £200. What is the explanation?

The Premier: The loss accounts for this amount.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*Government Stores*, £16,233—agreed to.

Vote—*Taxation*, £13,473:

Mr. HUGHES (East Perth) [9.52]: I wonder why the Government insist on people who are not liable for taxation filling in taxation returns. It is easy for a man to know whether he is liable for a tax or not.

Mr. Brown: How is the Commissioner to know?

Mr. HUGHES: He can select and examine anyone to see if he is liable for income tax.

Mr. Mann: Would it not mean an increase in the number of inspectors?

Mr. HUGHES: When an employer puts in his income tax return he has to show the wages he is paying. If the employees do not put in returns, and they have taxable incomes, the Taxation Department can locate them. It is not easy to avoid taxation if a man is earning over the taxable amount. Most of the wage earners in the State have continuous employment. The percentage of floating population is very small. If any of the people, who should pay, fail to put in their returns, they can be discovered. The returns of non-taxable incomes provide a certain amount of work in the office. When a return is lodged it is registered and is filed in its order. It is then sent to the assessors, and by the time it has passed through the hands of all the officials and comes back into the filing system, a good deal of labour has been involved. Last year the Premier said

that there were 39,000 taxpayers in the State and if people under £200 were relieved, it would reduce the number to 19,000. He said there were 100,000 able-bodied adults in the State. The Premier continues—

The maximum tax is 2s. I am as anxious to reduce the burden on the people as is the hon. member, but we have only 39,000 people paying income tax, and if the amendment were carried, about 20,000 of them would escape taxation altogether.

If the number of our taxpayers is reduced from 39,000 to 19,000, then in the very nature of things there ought to be a corresponding reduction in the cost of collecting the tax. The collection of tax from 19,000 people should not cost as much as collecting taxes from 39,000.

The Premier: Of course, we have nothing to do with that.

Mr. HUGHES: But we ought to have something to do with it. I know all about the arrangement. Does the Premier say no reduction is obtainable in the cost if the work is reduced by half? Then the agreement is a very bad one. In such circumstances there should be some rebate of the charges made by the Commonwealth. What is the use of forcing people to put in income tax returns who are not liable to pay tax? It puts them to a lot of useless trouble. Very often they have to engage someone to make out the complicated return for them, though they know they are not liable to any tax. Such an arrangement is not sound from a business point of view or from any other point of view.

Mr. A. Thomson: It means unnecessary work.

Mr. HUGHES: I appeal to the Premier to relieve such people from the necessity for putting in returns.

The Premier: Then we shall get no tax from anyone.

Mr. HUGHES: We have all the machinery for finding out who is liable.

The Premier: I do not think we have.

Mr. HUGHES: How then do the Taxation Department catch people who attempt to evade payment of tax? Again, there is the check that employers are compelled to furnish returns of payments to employees. People with fixed employment—and that is the majority of the people—are easily traced. Even if relieving the people who are not liable to tax of the necessity for making a return involved some loss, that loss would not be so great as the expense of handling the unnecessary returns. Certainly the relief would be very much appreciated by the people who are affected. Let the Premier apply to the Federal Government for a corresponding reduction in the charges.

Mr. Davies: Those people would still have to make Federal returns.

Mr. HUGHES: That has nothing to do with us. Our form might be greatly simplified for people whose only income is their salary or wages. Mostly those who furnish returns have only to state their salary or their

wages, their insurance premiums, and the number of their children. Personally, I am against allowing people to deduct insurance premiums. Insurance is much the same as money placed in the bank.

The Colonial Secretary: We should encourage people to insure.

Mr. HUGHES: Of course, but the man who capitalises income in insurance should not be relieved any more than the man who lodges money in the bank by way of providing for his old age.

Mr. Davies: Then he is only taxed on the interest he receives.

Mr. HUGHES: But he cannot make a deduction of, say, £10 for money placed in the bank. What is an insurance policy?

The Colonial Secretary: An efficient insurance.

Mr. HUGHES: I contend that from the standpoint of taxation the man who pays an insurance premium is putting by money for an evil day.

The Premier: That has nothing to do with this vote, of course.

Mr. HUGHES: This is the vote under which we spend money on fancy returns and a lot of unnecessary printing and paper.

The Minister for Mines: That expenditure is provided for by legislation and cannot be avoided.

Mr. HUGHES: The legislation should be amended.

The Minister for Mines: You cannot discuss legislation on this vote.

Mr. HUGHES: But I have been doing so. Very few deductions, apart from insurance, apply to the salary or wage earner. There is the allowance for children, of course. Such a taxpayer would be glad to surrender the deduction of the insurance premium for the sake of simplicity in the return. Gifts exceeding £5 for charitable purposes are allowable deductions.

The CHAIRMAN: That phase had better be discussed under the Land Tax and Income Tax Bill which will come before the House. The Commissioner of Taxation merely carries out the law. If the hon. member desires the law to be altered, it will be better for him to move in that direction when the Bill is introduced.

Mr. HUGHES: I am discussing the item of contingencies, Sir. Out of that item these services are paid for.

The CHAIRMAN: It is a fine point. Very well.

Mr. HUGHES: The deduction for charitable donations relieves a wealthy man from income tax. Very often, however, the wealthy man does not give, *pro rata*, as much from his income as the man in the street who contributes a shilling here and a shilling there. The man in the street gets no relief from taxation on that account. Large numbers of businesses give away money in charity for advertising purposes. I do not blame the business men who do so. If I were a business man I would give large donations to charity purely as a business proposition.

The Premier: But you would not admit it, surely?

Mr. HUGHES: I would have to admit it to the Premier, because he would know that that was my reason. Many business concerns charge charitable expenditure to the advertising account. It is more effective advertising than the ordinary Press advertising, because it is brought before the public more prominently and is paragraphed all over the place.

The Premier: That is the law. It has nothing to do with these Estimates.

Mr. HUGHES: If the law has nothing to do with these Estimates, what are they for?

The Premier: Will you discuss betting business on this vote?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is wandering from the point. He has a right to call the attention of the Government to the fact that in his opinion it is too much to ask the Government to pay so much for collecting the tax from 39,000 people. He is wandering from the point, however, and discussing things that have nothing to do with this vote.

Mr. HUGHES: This vote applies to contingencies and matters affecting the collection of the tax.

The CHAIRMAN: If you desire to discuss the right of the Government to collect this tax from the people, you had better do it when the Land Tax and Income Tax Bill is before the House.

Mr. HUGHES: I will deal with the matter then. I am in order in appealing to the Premier to relieve the people, who are not obliged to pay any tax, from the necessity for putting in returns. Many people are not educated and they find difficulty in compiling their returns. Every hon. member has had experience, when people have asked them for assistance in that direction. It would be a relief to 20,000 people if they were freed from the necessity of putting in that return.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [10.18]: I agree with the member for East Perth that it would be a great relief to the rest of the taxpayers if they were not called upon to put in returns at all.

Mr. Hughes: I take it the Premier is obliged to reply to my statements, and not wander all over the place!

The PREMIER: I listened with great interest to the hon. member's remarks, and his complaint is that the Federal Government should not collect as much as they are doing. I agree with him, and if we could get out of payments I would be pleased to get out of them. The amount involved in conducting the department prior to the amalgamation was £74,000, and after the amalgamation £73,000, so that as a result of the amalgamation we have made a saving of £1,000. We have saved more like £20,000 per annum in addition.

Hon. P. Collier: It would be a good thing if we could put an end to the system, because they are getting that £30,000 out of the pockets of the people.

Mr. Hughes: Don't you think that, if the State Government made a start, it would influence the Federal Government in granting a reduction?

The PREMIER: I am told that a good many people earning between £400 and £500 manage to avoid taxation. I do not know if it is true. I would like to relieve everyone of the trouble they are put to, and I will draw the attention of the Commissioner of Taxation to the hon. member's remarks, in which he suggested that people whose income is not taxable should be relieved from the necessity for putting in a return.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [10.25]: I agree with the member for East Perth that it would be a good thing if we could reduce the annual amount now paid to the Commonwealth for collecting our taxes, and also if we could induce the officers responsible for collecting the State tax to reduce the amount they call upon the individual taxpayer to pay into the Treasury. I want to know what is the position of the Commissioner of Taxation? When the agreement was entered into with the Commonwealth Government in 1921, under which they undertook the collection of taxation, it was provided that the State should appoint a Commissioner of Taxation, whose duty it would be to attend to the collection of State taxes, and who would be responsible to the State Government alone. There was also a provision in the agreement that the Government might appoint the person who, for the time being, happened to be the Federal Deputy Commissioner of Taxation. We considered that our taxation Commissioner would be appointed by the State Government, responsible to the State Government only, and watching State interests. We find now, however, that the position has been nullified by the appointment of our Commissioner of Taxation to the position of Federal Deputy Commissioner of Taxation. In effect, we have handed over the whole of our Taxation Department to the Commonwealth. Our Taxation Commissioner has acted as Federal Deputy Commissioner since Mr. Whiteley left the Federal appointment. Our officer is now responsible to the Federal Government. In my opinion there is no doubt that our Commissioner will secure the permanent appointment as Federal Deputy Commissioner of Taxation. If that be so, it will be wrong for the State Government to retain the services of our officer as Commissioner of Taxation for Western Australia. It would inevitably follow that he would regard his responsibility to the State Government as subservient to his responsibility to the Federal Government, whose permanent officer he had become. In those circumstances, the officer would be independent of the State Government in the discharge of his duties, and in collecting State taxation. He need not care how he performs his duties for the State. To-day we have only one Commissioner; it was intended we should have two. If the present occupant of the office secures the permanent appointment as Federal

Deputy Commissioner, he should not be retained as the State Commissioner. He should not be allowed to hold the dual office under any circumstances. I do not know what we can do. There are many amendments I would like to discuss to the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act, but they are out of order at this stage. In our former legislation, however, we granted autocratic powers to the Commissioner of Taxation. The Commissioner is the sole interpreter of Acts of Parliament in some instances, and no matter what the intention of Parliament was when they passed the legislation, this officer is set up like a Czar and interprets legislation at his own sweet will. He interprets the legislation, I think, deliberately against the taxpayer. If it is possible to twist the meaning of a word or the interpretation of a section against the interests of the taxpayer, he will do so.

Hon. M. F. Troy: And the officer is upheld by the Minister.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Unfortunately, there is no need for the support of the Minister, because the Commissioner has autocratic powers.

Hon. M. F. Troy: But the Treasurer wants money!

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, and it would look as though the money is to be secured by fair means, and if that is not possible, by foul means.

The Premier: You should not say that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I will give an instance where the Commissioner of Taxation has either deliberately twisted the meaning of an Act regarding certain deductions, or else he is not competent to understand the meaning of plain English. Last session we passed the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act under which members of Parliament were allowed to deduct travelling expenses. It appeared to hon. members that the wording was perfectly clear, and it did not seem possible to misunderstand the meaning. Even if the wording was not exactly clear, there could be no mistake as to the intention of Parliament. Any officer possessing reason and common sense should be able to interpret the meaning of that provision. I do not think there is any room for doubt, even on the literal meaning of the paragraph, which read as follows:—

Provided that the travelling expenses of a member of Parliament shall be allowed and assessed as follows: If a member is the representative of the Metropolitan, Metropolitan-Suburban, or West Province, or of an electoral district therein, such expenses shall not exceed £50 per annum: and if such member is the representative of any other province or district, such expenses shall not exceed £100 per annum.

That paragraph is perfectly clear, and the intent is plain. When members sent in their taxation returns—I do not know what other members' experience was, but I am relating my own—they probably found that they were mistaken. The Commissioner said, in effect, "I do not know what your travel-

ling expenses were. I cannot tell; you must produce your vouchers."

Mr. A. Thomson: We are all in the same boat.

Hon. P. COLLIER: As I pointed out to the Commissioner in a letter I wrote to him, one could not imagine a more utterly absurd and insane request. Even if it were possible to comply with the request—I hope it is not—I would not expect members to retain a pile of vouchers regarding every amount they spent during the year. In any case, they could not have done so, because the Act was only passed last session and members did not know that they would be called upon for this information. In those circumstances no steps could be taken to retain vouchers, even if an attempt were made to secure them.

Mr. A. Thomson: The Commissioner will not allow you anything for expenses while you are away from home.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have not been allowed a penny for expenses.

Mr. Marshall: Mine is in suspense.

Mr. Chesson: So is mine.

Hon. F. T. Broun: It is ridiculous.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is why I make the statement that this officer deliberately tries to twist the meaning of words. He says that, if the word "expenses" had read "allowances," it would have been all right, but as "expenses" is used, he must have proof that the expenditure has been incurred. If the word had been "allowance" it would mean that Parliament intended an allowance of that amount to be made, irrespective of what had been spent, and without regard to the production of vouchers.

Hon. F. T. Broun: In the Federal Act the word used is "allowance."

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, the Commissioner said the Federal Act prescribed "allowance" whereas ours used the word "expenses." There can be no doubt about what was intended. It was the clear intention of this House to follow the lines of the Federal Act and so make an allowance, without members having to produce vouchers. That is one instance of the officer in charge going out of his way in an attempt to twist the plain meaning of the Act. There is no desire to interpret our taxation Acts favourably to the taxpayers. If it be possible to devise a construction adverse to the taxpayer, it is done in every instance. Another taxation question was decided in court the other day in respect of a member of this House who had incurred expenditure in prospecting. I know well what the intention of Parliament was. Yet we have a decision by the court that men who may expend thousands of pounds per annum in assisting prospectors—which is the very backbone of prospecting, for if it were not for the men who find the money to enable others to go out and search for minerals there would not be any prospecting at all—are to be taxed on any returns that may accrue. It was in order to relieve those men

that our Act was passed. The number of prospectors financially able to go out on their own account is very few indeed. Prospecting has been kept alive by those who back it, yet now they are to be penalised in taxation. The inevitable result will be that they will refuse to back prospectors since, if anything is found as the result of the prospecting, the man behind the prospector is to be mulcted in taxation.

Mr. MULLANY: That will stop prospecting altogether.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Of course it will. Moreover, it is entirely against the intention of Parliament. There again we had the interpretation of the officer in charge of the Taxation Department. He said, "Here is a chance to grab an additional £5,000 or £6,000, and I am going to do it." It does not matter to him whether he will be adversely affecting an industry, he must gather in the money. In future I will be very careful when dealing with amendments of that sort, for I intend to clip the wings of the taxation autocrats who say it lies with them to decide what is to be done. The Taxation Commissioner's interpretation of last year's provision relating to members of Parliament is a deliberate departure from the clear intention of Parliament, and is entirely unnecessary. Had there been any desire whatever on the part of the responsible officer to deal with the matter fairly, it was open to him to do so. Coming back to the other question, I say we are not going to have an officer holding this dual position; that if the present State Commissioner, who is now Acting Federal Deputy Commissioner as well, secures the permanent appointment, I hope the Government will take immediate steps to appoint another man to be responsible to this Parliament for the collection of State taxes, not a man to give merely secondary attention to it by reason of the fact that he holds a position in the Federal Taxation Department.

Mr. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [10.35]: The Committee will remember that the proposal for the amalgamation of the two taxation departments was carried by an overwhelming majority. But four or five members voted against it. I was one of them. My chief reason for opposing it was that I considered it only right that the State should collect the taxation for both State and Commonwealth, and hand over the Federal quota. We were then assured by the Premier that the Federal Government would never agree to such a proposal. Yet now we see in the Press that other States have entered into arrangements with the Federal Government under which those States collect the taxation and hand over the Federal quota. I should like the Premier to tell us whether he knows anything about those later agreements, whether they are more advantageous to the respective States than is that under which we are working. Sooner or later a uniform system will have to be adopted.

Mr. A. THOMSON (Katanning) [10.36]: I intend to move as an amendment that this amount of £12,189 be reduced by £1.

The CHAIRMAN: Have we finished dealing with the Commissioner of Taxation?

Hon. P. COLLIER: If you move that amendment now, you will close the general discussion.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [10.37]: The Leader of the Opposition knows that the late Federal Deputy Commissioner of Taxation has retired from the service, and that Mr. Black is Acting Federal Deputy Commissioner. I do not know whether the time at which Mr. Whiteley's services end has yet been reached. If it has not, we can appoint our own Commissioner. The hon. member somewhat misjudges Mr. Black. The member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo) desired that I should tell him something about the agreements made between the Commonwealth and South Australia and Victoria for the collection of taxation. I do not know the details, but I know that we have an agreement that suits us very well financially, and I know also that this agreement can be terminated by the Federal Government on six months' notice being given.

Mr. Angelo: Can we terminate it?

The PREMIER: Yes, but that would not be good for us. In the meantime we continue our agreement. I cannot tell the hon. member just what the conditions are as between South Australia and Victoria and the Federal Government.

Mr. Latham: Is there any chance of having the assessment forms simplified?

The PREMIER: Yes, I think they will be simplified.

Hon. M. F. TROY (Mt. Magnet) [10.40]: The Leader of the Opposition referred to the arbitrary rulings of the Commissioner of Taxation. I have a conviction that the Commissioners of Taxation, both Federal and State, are in the habit of giving arbitrary rulings, particularly with regard to people that are unable to fight them. When it comes to a big association or a wealthy corporation the Commissioners are prepared to climb down, to make allowances and to give all possible consideration. To-day I was reading the speech of the chairman of the Midland Railway Company to the annual meeting, in which reference was made to the company's position regarding land tax. The Commonwealth Government have a large sum of money outstanding because of an appeal made by the company. I do not know whether the same applies to the State Government, but I have a suspicion that it does.

The Premier: I do not think so.

Hon. M. F. TROY: It struck me as remarkable that, whereas the company were allowed to evade their responsibility for a number of years, the same thing could not happen with a private individual. A private individual has to pay up or be prosecuted, but with a wealthy corporation the Commissioner temporises.

Hon. P. Collier: For seven years it was allowed to remain in abeyance, whereas a private individual is prosecuted straight away.

Hon. M. F. TROY: It is more than seven years, and still the Commonwealth Government are temporising.

Hon. P. Collier: They remitted about £26,000.

Hon. M. F. TROY: Yes. That could not possibly happen in the case of an individual. An individual receives a letter from the Crown Law Department and is fined for neglecting to pay by the due date. I do not wish to mention names, but I find that other associations get concessions and consideration from the Commissioner of Taxation such as the private individual cannot get. The latter is dealt with in the most arbitrary manner. The Commissioner realises that the wealthy corporation can and will fight him in the courts, but that the humble individual cannot afford to. He cannot pay the costs for taking an appeal to the Full Court and then to the High Court. The Treasurer is always in need of money, and the officer who endeavours to get it, no matter how, is regarded as a valuable officer. We should not single out any body of people for special consideration, and the Premier should insist upon the law as interpreted by Parliament being administered by the Commissioner of Taxation and not interpreted by him. With all respect to the Crown Law Department, I do not attach much weight to their decisions.

Hon. P. Collier: Much of their law has not stood the test in the courts during the last year or two.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I got a decision from the Crown Law Department and a week later got an entirely contrary one.

Hon. P. Collier: You could have got a different one the day afterwards.

Hon. M. F. TROY: In my opinion the Crown Law officers have too much work to do. It is impossible for one or two men to give proper consideration to the multitude of affairs they have to attend to, so I do not blame them particularly. Parliament a few years ago provided for a deduction in respect of medical expenses for persons in receipt of a certain income and the Commissioner of Taxation quibbled about it. He laid down an arbitrary rule that a taxpayer, to obtain the medical deduction, could not deduct rates, taxes and insurance. Parliament had provided that there should be certain deductions including rates, taxes and insurance and that the medical deduction should be additional for persons receiving less than a certain income. Yet the Commissioner of Taxation ruled that in order to get the medical deduction, in arriving at their income, they could not first deduct rates, taxes and insurance. Who gave him the right to order that? Parliament was definite. How came his decision? Are we going to allow our instructions to be flouted in this way? Is the Commissioner of Taxation to be

a law unto himself? It is the Premier's duty to tell the Commissioner he must not act in that manner. In the city it is possible to get 100 different legal opinions on one question; otherwise there would be no legal actions. The Commissioner of Taxation knows that an individual cannot fight the Government and so he has the last word, but to a wealthy corporation he defers. That is not right. The average individual is pretty ignorant regarding legal matters; he is otherwise engaged and is too busy to bother about them. A man in the country is absolutely helpless. One man sent in his income tax return, which he considered contained complete details of his income. The department told him it was not correct, made it up for him and sent him a peremptory note demanding payment. I had to secure a return from an employer, declaring that the income shown in that person's return was the correct income, before I could secure redress for him. It is not the province of the Commissioner to deal with the weak men in one way and the strong men in another way. We should have an undertaking from the Premier that the Crown Law Department or the Commissioner of Taxation is not justified in unfairly interpreting a law to the advantage of the Treasurer. Nothing could be clearer than Parliament's decision that a person in receipt of a certain income is entitled to a deduction for medical expenses as well as for rates, taxes and insurance. Are not the general community as much entitled to consideration as the Commissioner of Taxation? They do not receive it. Both New South Wales and Queensland have a legal officer to look after the interests of the community in such matters. In this State the taxpayers have no such protection.

The Premier: You can always go to Mr. Sayer.

Hon. M. F. TROY: Because I am a member of Parliament and am entitled to do so. The general community have not that privilege. The Commissioner should not be allowed to give arbitrary decisions such as he is giving. The general public is hopelessly in his net. From time to time we are approached by people from the country who are wrongly taxed, and who are being threatened with penalties, because they do not accede to the unfair demands of the department.

Mr. HUGHES: According to the Estimates we have to pay to the Commonwealth, for the collection of taxes, a sum of £12,189. On the number of taxpayers in this State it works out at 12s. 6d. per assessment.

The Premier: It costs us £34,000. There are other taxes beside the income tax.

Mr. HUGHES: Out of the 39,000 taxpayers in 1921, 29,000 were wage and salary earners. There is not much work attached to assessing the salary of a wage earner. A sum of 12s. 6d. per assessment is an abnormally high figure to charge. A saving could be effected by the establishment of a board of public accountants and auditors, similar to the Barristers' Board. At present account-

ants and auditors are not registered, and are not liable if the balance sheets they certify to do not show all the items required by the Taxation Department. It would be in their own interests if the accountants were brought in under a board, and it would also serve as a protection to the people who employed them. It should be made a condition of registration that they should only certify to balance sheets and profit and loss account statements that showed the exact position from the point of view of income tax. This would do away with a lot of unnecessary work in the Taxation Department. The examination of returns could be restricted. The statement of a registered accountant could be accepted by the department, and it would be necessary only to make a check occasionally to see that everything was in order.

Progress reported.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [10.55]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until 7.30 p.m. to-morrow.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 10.56 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 26th September, 1923.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 5.30 p.m., and read prayers.

BILL—LUNACY ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Hon. T. MOORE (Central) [5.38] in moving the second reading said: This is a very short Bill, the necessity for which was made apparent owing to a recent decision by a judge of the Supreme Court. Some years ago a patient, who is at present in the Claremont Hospital for the Insane, was brought before the Criminal Court in Kalgoolie, and the jury found him not guilty of the charge preferred against him, on the ground of insanity.

The patient was committed to the Hospital for the Insane during the Governor's pleasure. He was not convicted of any offence, nor had he been found guilty of any charge. After a lapse of some years, his friends decided that there was a great improvement in his condition and they had him examined by several doctors. Six doctors have pronounced the man sane. Despite that fact, it is not possible, owing to the law as it stands to-day, for the patient to be discharged from the institution. Under Section 107 of the existing Lunacy Act, he applied to a judge in the Supreme Court for the right to prove his sanity. That is where we understood he should prove his sanity, that being the intention of Parliament. The judge's decision was that he could not order the release of the patient under that section. The judge stated that because Section 107 set out that the patient was to be detained during the Governor's pleasure, he could not act.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You mean the judge could not act?

Hon. T. MOORE: Yes. Sections 69 to 84 deal with the criminal-insane and Section 81 provides—

The Governor may permit any person confined in any hospital for the criminal-insane, not being a person under conviction and sentence, to be liberated from custody or confinement, upon such terms and conditions as he may think fit. On the breach of any such conditions, such person may be retaken and dealt with as hereinafter enacted in case of an escape.

Section 107 seems to indicate clearly that Parliament intended that all patients should come within its purview, because it reads—

If a judge receives information upon oath, or has reason to suspect, that any person of sound mind is confined in any hospital for the insane or licensed house, the judge may order the superintendent of such hospital or licensed house to bring the confined person before him for examination at a time to be specified in the order.

That section refers to "any person." It does not say, "all persons except those who have been sent to an asylum during the Governor's pleasure, because they are supposed to be criminally insane." The section is clear. It further provides—

If upon the examination of the confined person, and of the superintendent, and of any medical or other witnesses, it is made to appear to the satisfaction of the judge that the confined person is of sound mind, the judge may direct that the confined person be immediately discharged from the custody of the superintendent of such hospital or licensed house, unless he is detained therein for some other cause by due process of law.

The judge has based his argument as to why he cannot act under Section 107 on the words "unless he is detained therein for some other cause by due process of law." The judge