

which is to seek a five day banking week by all constitutional means, and this meeting further asserts that a banking five day week is a long overdue and justifiable industrial reform.

(2) That this meeting, representative of all bank officers in this State, pledges its full co-operation with a plan to extend public banking hours on Friday afternoons, if necessary, providing a Bill now before the West Australian Parliament, to provide that each and every Saturday shall be a Bank Holiday, is passed.

I will now read the amendments added by Sir Thomas Playford to the South Australian legislation. They are as follows:—

- (1) This Act shall come into operation on a day to be fixed by the Governor by proclamation.
- (2) A proclamation bringing this Act into operation shall not be made until the Governor is satisfied that arrangements which will operate generally throughout the State have been made and will be carried out for keeping trading banks open until 5 o'clock p.m. on every Friday which is not a bank holiday.
- (3) If, after this Act has been brought into operation, arrangements as mentioned in subsection (2) of this section cease to operate the Governor may, by proclamation, declare that the principal Act shall thereafter have effect as if this Act had not been passed.

I think this House should follow the lead given by the South Australian Parliament. I have read the resolutions carried at a meeting of the Bank Officials' Association of Western Australia showing they are prepared to negotiate with their masters on the question of staying open until 5 p.m. on Friday evening. As I have already said, I concur with Sir Thomas Playford that closing the banks on Saturdays causes some hardship to men with savings bank accounts, but the opening of the banks until 5 p.m. on Friday evenings would overcome that objection; it would permit people to do their trading during that period.

Most people engaged under these awards cease duty at 4.15 or 4.30 on Friday evening. The bank officers have said that they are prepared to accept the conditions to accommodate those people who wish to bank late on Friday evening, and I think it is an excellent compromise. It is a provision to which this State should agree, and the bank officers should be entitled to their leisure hours. Most hon. members have occupied positions in which it has been necessary for them to work 5½ days a week, and I am sure they will agree that by the time one gets home after a half day's work on Saturday, most of the day is gone and it is not always

convenient for one to attend sporting fixtures and social functions. In sponsoring this Bill my main concern is for the bank officers of Western Australia. I sincerely believe that we can give these bank officers a five-day working week without causing undue inconvenience to the general public. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Hon. H. L. Roche, debate adjourned until Tuesday, the 4th November.

Tabling of Papers.

The Hon. R. C. MATTISKE: I ask—that the papers from which the hon. Mr. Jeffery quoted be laid on the Table of the House.

The PRESIDENT: Is the hon. member prepared to lay the papers on the Table of the House?

The Hon. G. E. JEFFERY: Yes, Mr. President.

Papers tabled.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (Minister for Railways—North): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 3.30 p.m. tomorrow.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 6.13 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, the 29th October, 1958.

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

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE.

FRUIT-FLY.

Tests with Ethylene-di-bromide.

1. Mr. NORTON asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Has the use of ethylene-di-bromide proved a success in the control of fruit-fly in packed fruit?

(2) On what varieties of fruit has ethylene-di-bromide been tested?

(3) Have any experiments been carried out on rock melons and egg fruit?

(4) Would South Australia admit fruit from Western Australia if it carried a certificate that it had been treated with ethylene-di-bromide?

(5) What is the cost per bushel case for the fumigation?

Mr. KELLY replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) A wide range of local fruits including apples, pears, plums, bananas, grapes, loquats, and citrus.

(3) No.

(4) No information available, and inquiries would have to be made from South Australia.

(5) Cost of actual fumigant would be less than 1d. per case. To this must be added labour and overhead connected with the gas-proof chamber.

FRUIT FOR EXPORT.

Cartage of Soft Fruit in Refrigerated Railway Vans.

2. Mr. HEARMAN asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

Can he reconcile the answer to a question, given to me on the 18th September, 1958, and stating that refrigerated rail wagons for the carriage of soft fruit are as yet only in the proposal stage, and therefore will not be available for the coming season, with an advertisement in the name of the Western Australian Government appearing in "The W.A. Fruitgrower," October, 1958, which reads in part—

More Improved Services.

Refrigerated wagons for the conveyance of soft fruit are now in process of delivery?

Mr. GRAHAM replied:

Eight new ice-cooled insulated W.A. vans have been issued to traffic recently, and these are the wagons referred to in the advertisement in the October issue of "The W.A. Fruitgrower." The answer to the hon. member's question on the 18th September, 1958, referred to vans fully refrigerated by a mechanical process. The confusion in description of vans is regretted.

RAILWAY ROAD TRANSPORT SERVICE.

Concessions Over Private Hauliers.

3. Mr. BOVELL asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

What concessions (including Transport Board fees), rebates and discounts does the Railway Road Transport Service enjoy in relation to fuel tax, tyre rebates, licence and permit fees, etc., over private road hauliers in areas where rail services have been discontinued?

Mr. GRAHAM replied:

The comparison is as follows:—

Railway road services—

Replacement parts—Less 25 per cent. and no sales tax.

Fuel—Cost 3s. 1½d. gallon (includes tax).

Tyres and tubes—Less 28½ per cent.

Police traffic licence (not on truck)—Nil.

Transport Board licence—£18 16s. 6d. per year.

Private road operator—

Replacement parts—Less up to 20 per cent.

Fuel—Cost 3s. 7½d. gallon (includes tax).

Tyres and tubes—Less up to 13 per cent.

Police traffic licence (not on truck)—£85 1s. per year.

Transport Board licence—£28 4s. 9d. per year.

BUSSELTON JETTY.**Cost of Improvements, Maintenance, and Repairs.**

4. Mr. BOVELL asked the Minister for Works:

What amount of money was expended separately on—

- (a) improvements;
- (b) maintenance;
- (c) repairs;

to the Busselton jetty during each of the financial years July, 1953, to June, 1958?

Mr. TONKIN replied:

(b) and (c)
(a) Maintenance
Improvements, and Repairs.

	£	£
1953-54	Nil	26,038
1954-55	1,674	16,932
1955-56	541	7,482
1956-57	Nil	5,262
1957-58	212	5,525

No. 5. *This question was postponed.*

WINES.**Local Production, and Imports.**

6. Mr. BRAND asked the Minister representing the Chief Secretary:

Will he obtain from the Bureau of Census and Statistics and state for the information of Parliament—

- (a) the total value of all wines imported into Western Australia during the year ended the 30th June, 1958;
- (b) the total value of wine produced locally during the same period;
- (c) the total value of locally produced wine exported during that period?

Mr. MOIR replied:

The figures for the total value of wines produced locally during the year ended the 30th June, 1958, are not yet available; so, in order to assist the hon. member I am providing figures for the year ended the 30th June, 1957, and those for 1957-58 which are available. Gallonages as well as values are shown also, as no value figures are obtained from local small producers.

- (a) Imports from overseas for the year ended the 30th June, 1957 were 976 gallons at a value of £2,035, and interstate 808,465 gallons at a value of £572,302, a total of 809,441 gallons and £574,337.

For 1957-58 the overseas figures were 482 gallons at a value of £1,200; and for interstate, 647,426 gallons and £475,950, being totals of 647,908 gallons and £477,150.

- (b) During 1956-57, 519,453 gallons at a value of £230,383 (not including excise) were produced locally by the major producers. In addition

134,558 gallons were produced by small producers. The 1957-58 figures are not available.

- (c) Exports overseas during 1956-57 were 174 gallons, at a value of £208; and interstate, 5,857 gallons at a value of £7,151, being totals of 6,031 gallons and £7,359.

During 1957-58 the figures were—overseas, 48 gallons and £120; and interstate, 7,251 gallons and £8,706, totals being 7,299 gallons and £8,826.

Ships' stores are also classified as exports. During 1956-57 overseas vessels took 29,573 gallons valued at £12,757; and interstate vessels, 2 gallons at £6. During 1957-58 overseas vessels took 24,996 gallons to a value of £12,856; and interstate vessels, nil.

No. 7. *This question was postponed.*

PARLIAMENT HOUSE.**Completion of Additions.**

8. Mr. BRAND asked the Premier:

When will the new section of Parliament House, on which work is proceeding at present, be ready for occupation?

Mr. TONKIN (for Mr. Hawke) replied:

At the end of 1959, subject to funds being available.

No. 9. *This question was postponed.*

DAGLISH-WHITFORDS BEACH RAILWAY.**Application of Town Planning Orders, etc.**

10. Mr. COURT asked the Minister representing the Minister for Town Planning:

(1) Are there any town planning orders, or Metropolitan Region Interim Development Orders still in existence in respect of the area that would have been related to the proposed Daglish-Whitfords Beach railway line had it been proceeded with?

(2) Does the Government abandonment of this railway project mean that any existing orders will be cancelled immediately, and the land released for normal sale or other dealings by owners?

Mr. MOIR replied:

(1) There is only one Metropolitan Region Interim Development Order covering the whole of the metropolitan region and this includes the proposed Daglish-Whitfords Beach railway line. Following the recent Cabinet decision in regard to this line, steps will be taken to amend the order in due course to delete the proposed railway line.

In the meantime, any applications received under the order in respect of land affected by the proposed line will be approved by the Town Planning Board.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

No. 11. *This question was postponed.*

WOKALUP CROSSING.

Accidents and Fatalities Since the 1st January, 1958.

12. Mr. I. W. MANNING asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) How many serious accidents have occurred at the Wokalup Crossing corner on the South-West Highway since the 1st January, 1958?

(2) How many lives have been lost as a result of accidents on this corner during the above period?

(3) Will he take steps to have this corner banked or altered to overcome the dangerous hazard which now exists because of the sharpness of the corner?

Mr. GRAHAM replied:

(1) This information may be obtained from the local authority.

(2) Two.

(3) The Main Roads Department is examining the situation.

RURAL AND INDUSTRIES BANK.

Sources of Finance to Agency Section.

13. Mr. HEARMAN asked the Treasurer:

Of the sum of £2,924,560 made available to the Agency Section of the Rural and Industries Bank since his Government came into office, will he state what sources supplied this money and whether it was all expended on agricultural development?

Mr. TONKIN (for Mr. Hawke) replied:

With the exception of £100,000 provided from the Commonwealth wire netting trust account and £20,416 from the "Advance to Treasurer" appropriation for advances to drought-affected settlers, the funds were provided from the General Loan Fund. The answer to the second part of this question is "No."

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE.**LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL.**

Deferment of Further Consideration.

Mr. BRAND asked the Deputy Premier:

I have received a letter from the Road Board Association of W.A.—and I presume leaders of other political parties have also received copies. The letter reads as follows:—

In view of the investigations at present being conducted into the Local Government Bill by Mr. K. H. Gifford, this Association is strongly of the opinion that no further action should be taken on this Bill until after a conference to be held on Monday next at which Mr. Gifford, the Parliamentary Draftsman and the Secretary of the Local Government Department will consider Mr. Gifford's recommendations.

It would be appreciated if this opinion could be given urgent consideration.

Yours faithfully,
M. Watts, Secretary.

Would the Deputy Premier give an assurance that time will be allowed as requested by the association?

Mr. TONKIN replied:

I have not seen a copy of the letter and am not prepared to give that assurance until I have.

BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

1, State Government Insurance Office Act Amendment (No. 2).

2, Industrial Arbitration Act Amendment (No. 3).

Introduced by the Hon. W. Hegney (Minister for Labour).

3, Land Act Amendment (No. 3).

Introduced by Mr. Cornell.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Cancer Council of Western Australia.

2, Inspection of Machinery Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Council.

**WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT
AMENDMENT BILL.**

Report.

Report of Committee adopted.

ROAD TRANSPORT.

Restoration of Subsidies.

MR. PERKINS (Roe) [4.45]: I move—

That, in view of the public announcement by the Minister for Railways that the Government would be prepared to reconsider the policy of reduction by one-seventh each year of the subsidy on road transport to areas not served by railways, this House considers that reductions already made should be restored and no further reductions made.

When the suspension of rail services on certain branch railway lines was under discussion in this House two sessions ago, it was emphasised by a Government spokesman that the action was experimental; and that if, as a result, there were unsatisfactory repercussions, the Government would consider the restoration of any particular service. At present we have a Royal Commissioner, Mr. Smith, investigating the matter. Some of us who represent districts where rail services have been suspended are hoping that the Royal Commissioner's report, when presented, will result in some lines, at least, being reopened.

The position in regard to the cut in subsidies on road transport in districts that are served by road transport rather than rail services was somewhat similar. Although perhaps it was not said in as many words, the implication was there that if the cut in subsidy caused greater difficulties than were expected, the Government would be prepared to reconsider the position.

Subsequent to the suspension of services on certain branch lines—three of which are in my district—I pressed the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Railways to go to my district and obtain first-hand information on the situation. Unfortunately, the Minister for Transport was not able to make the trip; but the Minister for Railways (Mr. Strickland) did go out to the Lake Grace-Hyden area and made a very comprehensive inspection of the districts that had been served by that particular railway line. After the inspection, a large public meeting was held at Hyden at which the views of the settlers were put forward; and subsequently the Minister for Railways made a lengthy speech, and replied to the various arguments that were submitted on that particular occasion.

The Minister stated—I think it was in reply to a question—that if settlers were able to illustrate that the reductions in the subsidy were having a disastrous effect on them, the Government would be prepared to reconsider the position. Of course, that is the reply which I would have expected any responsible Minister to make. Obviously the Government of the day, in considering the service provided by any State transport system, should be prepared to listen to the arguments put forward by those immediately affected, and I think that all the people present at that meeting were pleased to hear the Minister for Railways make that statement. The purpose of this motion is to give the Government an opportunity of stating its up-to-date views on this question; and of enlightening the people being served by these services as to what their future may be.

I do not think I need emphasise the importance of transport, whether by rail, road, air or any other method, to the various parts of the State. In a large and sparsely populated State such as Western Australia, it is inevitable that some of the transport services will be unprofitable; but that is one of the prices which any Government has to pay if we are to see this State developed as I think we all hope it will be.

I believe the Premier recognises the truth of that statement. I was interested to hear him say, when speaking to a motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition in connection with the settlement at Esperance—

I am sure that those hon. members in this House who are today practical farmers, or who in the past have been practical farmers, do not need me to

tell them that the cost of transport to farmers in the Esperance district must be tremendously heavy in comparison with the earnings which they can obtain from their individual farms. Clearly the small settlers down there must face tremendous difficulties in that direction.

In view of that statement there is no need for me to spend much time in proving to the House the importance of transport, at the lowest possible rates, to those districts which are distant from the main centres of population and from the main export ports.

The districts I have particularly in mind face difficulties similar to those which the Premier referred to in the case of Esperance. Almost all the subsidised road transport services operate in districts distant from the main centres of population and the main export ports. I have a copy of the Transport Board's report which details where these services operate and the subsidies that have been paid in the past; but I do not think I need go through them in detail. They are operating in very widespread areas—

Mr. Nalder: And some far removed from railways.

Mr. PERKINS: The ones I am referring to are all distant from railways. I am not making any particular reference, at this stage, to the districts where rail services have been suspended; because, as I said in my opening remarks, we have a Royal Commissioner inquiring at present into whether such services should be restored, and we are hoping that his report will result in at least some of those services being re-established. I believe—if I may say so in passing—that there is a particularly good case in the railway lines formerly serving the grain-producing areas—the wheat and sheep areas, as we commonly know them. There are big tonnages of grain in those districts to be transported, as well as large tonnages of superphosphate to be carried on the return journey, besides the other general merchandise which the transport services handle when serving any district.

The present position is that the first one-seventh reduction in subsidy to those areas not served by railways in the past took place on the 1st July last year. There has been a further one-seventh reduction this year, so that at present the subsidised road services have had a two-sevenths reduction in the overall amount of subsidy allotted to the districts where those services operate.

A rather peculiar method has been adopted by the Transport Board in calculating how this one-seventh or two-sevenths reduction will be applied. It has not been applied as a one-seventh reduction each year in the actual rates charged on any particular line of produce. To take, as an

example, a service operating from any point—whether in the area represented by the hon. member for Stirling or that which I represent—where livestock are carried, one would expect that a one-seventh reduction would have been made in the actual rate charged per ton or per load of livestock; but actually, under the system applied by the Transport Board, the one-seventh reduction each year is being made on the total amount of subsidy to the area; and that, in turn, is related back and divided into the tonnage of goods carried, with the result that some extraordinary anomalies exist at present.

For instance, I understand that on the cartage of stock from the Hopetoun area to Newdegate, hardly any subsidy is being paid by the Transport Board now; and I think that in another year, if the present method of calculating the reduction of subsidy is applied, the stock will be carted at ordinary commercial contract rates. I have no wish to particularly emphasise that difficulty, as it is largely an administrative one, and possibly the Transport Board might be persuaded to adopt some other method.

What I desire particularly to emphasise today is the desirability of restoring all these cuts, in order to get back to the position where settlers in these areas will receive a transport service, by rail and road, the same as they would have received, and at similar cost to that which would have been provided to the settler if the railway had gone right out into his district.

There are many anomalies; and at the present rate of reduction of subsidy, the subsidies could disappear entirely in three years on some classes of produce. I make that statement in order to emphasise that the settlers have had a very severe taste of what the increase in costs is likely to be in regard to particular commodities; and the fear is arising that if other increases are eventually going to be as great as those incurred in regard to these particular commodities, the settlers will face a very difficult position indeed.

I can think of many reasons why the Government should reconsider the matter at this stage. About two years ago, when it was previously raised in this House, the price of wool was approximately 100d. per lb.; but at present it is about 50d. per lb. or even a little less: that is, about half what it was two years ago. The prices of meat have also fallen very steeply: perhaps more in the local market than in the overseas market.

However, whereas in the past it was possible for breeders of merino sheep to obtain £2 10s., £3, and £3 10s. for their lambs off shears, they find that this year, for a similar type of lamb, it may not be possible to obtain more than 30s. The fall in the price of wool has been quickly reflected in the price of store sheep, and there has also been a considerable decrease in the price of fat stock. Of course, the

price of pelts has a considerable effect on the prices of lamb and mutton; but, in addition, there has been a fall in the price of meat per lb.

I make those two points to emphasise the difference in the present economic position of producers of wool in particular and—to a lesser degree—the producers of meat, compared with their economic position two years ago, when the Government considered this question of reducing subsidies in those districts served by road transport.

The position in regard to grain is entirely different. We have a wheat stabilisation scheme which maintains the price of wheat at a fairly level figure. The production of wheat at present is probably as profitable as it was two years ago. The production of coarse grains, however, is even more profitable, because we have managed to develop valuable outlets for our barley and oats overseas. The prices obtained for export barley and oats last season were quite profitable. The conclusion that one must draw from these facts is that districts which can produce grains as an alternative to the production of wool and meat are in a more fortunate position than those districts which are, in the main, limited to the production of wool and meat.

Hon. members need not draw on their imaginations to realise what the effect of the reduction in subsidy would be in the districts I have referred to, which are served by road transport. These districts are already very distant from the main centres of population and the principal export ports. Because of that, their freights are among the highest—in many instances—that are paid in this State. If, in addition to high rail freights, there are to be loaded on to them considerable increases in the cost of road transport, hon. members will realise the unfortunate position in which the settlers of those areas will be placed.

It will also be appreciated that in such circumstances, when wool and meat production become less profitable for most farmers in the State, and grain production proves to be more profitable, these districts served by road transport—which, in a great many instances, and particularly those in the district I represent—would be anxious to change over to the growing of grain. However, if the cost of the transport of grain were to be raised to prohibitive levels, obviously this would greatly discourage most farmers who are prepared to develop those areas compared to those in other districts where transport costs are more moderate. I emphasise that point particularly, because it shows the difference between the situation at present and the situation two years ago.

As I have said, wool and meat production were very profitable two years ago and grain production was reasonably profitable. At present, however, we have wool

and meat production being comparatively unprofitable and grain production comparatively profitable. Surely, in the interests of these people themselves and the State as a whole, it is desirable that every encouragement should be given to produce that type of produce which will return the most to the pockets of the individual producers and which eventually will be the most profitable for the State and the Commonwealth.

I am sure the Treasurer will understand that language. He realises that if our industries are made more profitable, the State as a whole will become more prosperous. The level of employment will rise, and the greater will be our prosperity all round. For that reason, it would be an absolute tragedy if, as a result of the elimination of subsidies in those districts served by road transport, the maximum production of grain that was possible was discouraged.

The Minister for Transport will realise that the prospect of a good grain harvest is the one factor that is counteracting the rather dismal business outlook in this State today. I do not wish to delve into that question; but I think all hon. members realise—I believe it was mentioned in the Lieutenant-Governor's Speech—that the prospect of a bountiful harvest may prove to be a tonic to promote the prosperity of the State; the sound balance of business activity; and, generally, a healthy economic position.

Another factor enters the question of grain production. Compared to the great variety of goods which are required for the production of grain, wool and meat production call for less machinery and fewer general commodities of many kinds. Some of the most profitable freight carried by the Railway Department is probably that necessary for the servicing of the grain production in particular. I think it is self-evident that a great deal more general freight will be carried in the production of grain than for produce such as wool and meat; although admittedly in most of our agricultural districts one type of production is complementary to another.

What I am emphasising is that if these districts are to take advantage of whichever line of production is most profitable for themselves, and eventually for the nation as a whole, then it is desirable that they should have transport services which carry their goods at a reasonable figure. There is naturally a feeling of resentment in the districts where railway services have been cut; also where the road transport subsidy is being reduced, because the people living in those particular areas feel they are being treated differently from those living in the rest of the State.

The Government has stated, in effect, that the people living in such districts must pay the ordinary commercial rates for whatever they have carted; that is, after the subsidy is entirely eliminated, and if

Government policy is not altered in the meantime. In marked contrast to the treatment meted out to such districts, one finds, in the districts served by the railway system—whether it be the metropolitan area, the larger towns, or the rest of the State served by Government transport—that the Government is quite prepared to lose a very considerable sum in providing a transport service for these portions of the State.

The Premier has already told us in the House this session that we may be facing a railway loss of perhaps £2,000,000 on working expenses. In addition to that, of course, is the fact that no interest has been paid by the railway system on the vast amount of loan money that has been invested in the railways by the various Governments over the years. In effect, the people served by a Government transport service—whether it be by the railway system or the State Shipping Service in the North-West—are served at a loss, and the service to the people benefiting from those particular services is being subsidised by the general revenue of the State and the Commonwealth.

We have the anomalous position, if we follow the argument to its logical conclusion, of the people living in districts served by road transport service formerly subsidised, and which will receive no subsidy unless the Government policy is altered at the end of seven years, being asked to pay the full costs of the transport within their particular areas. The only advantage they will receive from the Government transport services will be after their produce reaches the railhead. Then, of course, they share in the less than economic rate for the portion of the journey over the State transport system, whether it be by rail or ship, or any other Government subsidised service.

The people in the districts served by these road services, which were formerly subsidised, will receive no subsidy if the Government policy is not altered; and they will, in effect, be paying something through taxation, either direct or indirect, to subsidise their fellow producers in other portions of the State. But they will not be receiving a comparable benefit themselves.

I do not wish to unduly emphasise that particular aspect, but I think it is necessary to state the position in order to bring home to the Government just how anomalous the position will be. I think I would rest the case I hope to make through this motion on the fact that in common justice, and in the interests of our economy as a whole, the State should provide to these areas a transport service comparable with that provided anywhere else in the State.

In nearly all these districts, Governments over the years have given some encouragement to settlers to go out and develop their areas. In the first instance the land was thrown open for selection,

and subsequently assistance of one sort or another was given to settlers developing such areas.

Over the years Governments have accepted the fact that Government services were necessary in order to keep such districts in production, and I think we are justified in concluding that those districts have been developed with the full support of successive Governments. I should hate to think that the day would come when such is not to be the policy of any Government.

We hear a great deal of lip-service, from time to time, about the necessity for developing our State. However, I cannot help thinking that there is a lot of loose talk in that regard. It is a phrase which slips off the lips very easily indeed. But when the various Governmental and other authorities are asked to face up to the implications of that development, all sorts of excuses are made as to why such and such an authority should do nothing about it.

Quite obviously, if we are going to see that the State is developed, it is necessary to give reasonable Government services and reasonable facilities to the people who have sufficient of what it takes to go out and pioneer these areas. In a great many instances the settlers in the districts of which I am speaking have been there for many years—perhaps 30 or more.

A considerable number who went there with high hopes have not been able to stay the distance; and there are far too many instances of people who have used their life savings to develop holdings, not only in these districts, but in other areas of the State and have not been able to carry on. The result has been that their life savings have gone down the drain. That is a catastrophe, looked at from any angle, whether from the point of view of the individual or of the State as a whole.

In recent years since the war, better prices have been available for agricultural produce and many new settlers have commenced farming operations in the outer districts of the State. Some of them were able to develop fairly quickly, and did reasonably well while prices were buoyant and costs were rather low; but I think experienced farmers in this House will agree with me that the gilt has gone off the gingerbread and people making their living from the land have to be efficient. Even then, there is no great margin. That being so, the Government must realise that unless we are going to see these outer districts of the State stagnate and development cease, it will have to face up to the question of providing facilities at a similar level of cost to that which the older developed areas of the State already enjoy.

The Government is probably fairly well acquainted with most sides of this particular problem. I know that representations have been made to Government

Departments, as well as to Ministers, about the difficulties that have arisen and requests have been made that action along the lines contained in this motion be taken urgently. I feel this motion will give the Government an opportunity to state what its policy is on this particular question.

Obviously, if an agricultural district in the State is to develop on sound lines, the people in such a district need to know just what their future is and what their future level of costs is likely to be. If the Government is entirely unsympathetic, and is going to carry out the previous policy which was enunciated, without any consideration of the position, the quicker it says so the better. I feel it has had sufficient time to consider the position, and there is plenty of evidence available to the Government of the day to enable it to know the difficulties which are developing and the disastrous position which could develop in these districts if subsidies were entirely eliminated over a period of seven years.

At the end of that time, a very serious position will develop. If the Government is going to do nothing about the matter, the quicker it states its policy the better, so that people who are contemplating putting money into these particular districts will know where they stand, and will think twice about getting their money tied up.

I hope that is not the position; but if it is, then all the talk we have heard in the House about the development along the south coast and the development of many areas in the State is very little more than eye-wash. It would be a very severe judgment of the Government of the day if that were to be the position. Therefore, I am hopeful that this motion will give the Government an opportunity to state just what its policy is.

If the Government requires further information about the actual costs position in the districts concerned, I have no doubt that it can be obtained. I understand that at the present time the Transport Board is either making or contemplates making an investigation of costs in some of these districts. Such an investigation will be all to the good; but I do hope that whatever action is taken will be taken quickly; because, as I have tried to emphasise, the position is urgent.

There has already been a two-sevenths reduction in the subsidy to the districts which are served by Government-subsidised road transport, and which are not served by a railway; and in the way it has been applied there have been startling increases in the cost of transport of certain commodities from such districts to the railhead. If the Minister for Transport desires actual instances as to how that has worked out, I can easily obtain the information for him.

I do not wish to take up the time of the House by going into too much detail at this stage, because I feel this question

should be decided on its broader principles. It really boils down to a question as to whether the State is going to carry on with the policy of developing these areas which have proved to be reliable producing areas, and where the only hazard is the difficulty of transport at a reasonable figure at the present time. The Minister for Transport must agree with me on that point.

In all the districts where the subsidised road services operate, it has been proved beyond doubt that they are just as prolific in production, and just as reliable, as are many of the old-established and wealthy districts of the State. I have no doubt that if we could look back in 30 or 40 years' time, we would be staggered to know that any doubts could have been held as to the reliability of some of those districts.

I emphasise that there is plenty of evidence available that such districts are entirely reliable, and that all that is needed is sufficient capital to develop the properties, and the opportunity to market the produce at a reasonable cost. I hope the Government will view the motion sympathetically and will grasp this opportunity of stating Government policy on what I regard as one of the most important questions facing it.

On motion by the Hon. H. E. Graham (Minister for Transport), debate adjourned.

WOOL.

Inquiry into Cost of Production.

THE HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling)
[5.32]: I move—

That this House requests the Government to submit to the Agricultural Council at its next meeting the urgent necessity for an authoritative inquiry into the cost of production of wool in Australia, including separate consideration of the several States in—

- (1) agricultural areas;
- (2) pastoral areas.

So far as I can ascertain, no inquiry, which complies with all the requirements of the motion, has been made into the cost of production of wool. The only authoritative inquiry that has taken place, so far as I can ascertain, is that which was conducted in 1932, by what was known as the Commonwealth Wool Inquiry Committee; and that committee reported on the 26th October, 1932, which is almost exactly 26 years ago.

This body was set up by the Commonwealth Prime Minister of the day. It was not given the powers of a Royal Commission; nor was it a Select Committee of either House of the Federal Parliament. It was, according to the documents in this volume which I have in front of me, set

up by a letter, dated the 15th August, 1932, from the Prime Minister. The members of the committee were—

The Hon. John Gunn (Chairman).
Sir Graham Waddell, K.B.E.
Mr. J. B. Bridgen.
Mr. W. L. Payne.
Mr. R. C. Field.
Mr. B. A. N. Cole.
The Hon. E. Grayndler, M.L.C.
Mr. R. A. Ramsay.
Mr. James Clark.

From a perusal of the report, it would appear that Mr. Grayndler, M.L.C., partly through pressure of other business, and partly through ill-health, took very little part in the inquiry which was made, but the committee itself conducted public sessions over a period of two months and examined 72 witnesses. But, more important, it received 668 statements from the owners of 8,000,000 sheep in various parts of Australia, including quite a substantial number of owners in Western Australia.

According to the report, it is quite clear that no actual distinction was made between what we now refer to, I think, as agricultural and pastoral properties. The report says that sufficient exact and detailed information was not kept by small woolgrowers at that time. Therefore, the committee's conclusions came from typical medium and large properties under good seasonal conditions, which existed at the time of the inquiry.

I would suggest that in the run of years—the 26 years that have passed since the sittings of the committee—a considerable change has come over the record-keeping of what the committee refers to as the small grower. Today there would be little or no difficulty in obtaining authoritative information from this large and important section engaged in wool production in Australia, which carries on business in the agricultural areas, as distinct from those people who have large properties, usually in the outer areas of Western Australia, and in the outer parts of most of the other States, which are classed as pastoral areas.

It seems to me that there must be a considerable difference in the cost of production of the two types of property; and I think it would be desirable to attempt a separate inquiry to ascertain the exact types of difference which do exist in the production costs between these two sections of the wool-producing community. I have suggested, too, that some differentiation should be made to determine any variation in the costs of the several States.

This was attempted by the committee in 1932—in so far as the working expenses were concerned, anyway. In fact, the committee went further than that, because it dissected the State of New South Wales into three parts. One part was the Western Division—the committee referred there

to leaseholds—another was the Southern Riverina; and the third was "all other districts."

Then it dealt with Queensland as the whole State with central and northern sections. Victoria and South Australia were chiefly leasehold; and then it referred to Western Australia and Tasmania. The committee was dealing with working expenses, wool only, and excluding interest. According to the committee, the cost of production per lb. at that time varied considerably in regard to working expenses covering wool only and excluding interest; because in the Western Division of New South Wales the committee set down this cost at 3.68d per lb.; in all other districts in New South Wales at 6.72d. per lb.; in Victoria at 7.51d. per lb.; and in Western Australia 7.27d. per lb.

While I realise that these figures are quite valueless today—because, after the lapse of all these years, considerable changes have taken place in the value of money—nevertheless, taking these factors into consideration there would still be considerable variations in the costs as between the various States and as between the pastoral and the agricultural areas in those States.

In consequence, I have seen fit to incorporate in this motion the suggestions that, if the inquiry is to be made, separate investigations should, as far as is practicable, be carried out. It is apparent to me that no worth-while attempt can be made to decide whether any proceedings for the stabilisation of the wool industry should be had or not, unless we have an authoritative inquiry into production costs at some stage while we are thinking about these things.

As a preliminary to the wheat stabilisation proposals—which were subsequently embodied in statute law in this country; and which have been in operation until the present time; and which, in a slightly amended form, we are seeking now to renew—an inquiry into costs of production was carried out. A wheat costs of production committee was appointed by the Commonwealth Government in February, 1947, to inquire into and report upon the reasonable cost of the production of wheat, per bushel, in the Australian main wheat-growing districts; and to ascertain whether the basic items of cost could be established as an index to periodical variation in costs in the production of wheat.

The committee, in its report to the Commonwealth Government in March, 1948, found that the cost of growing wheat in the Commonwealth at that time was 6s. per bushel at the siding; and it advised that basic items of cost could be established as an index to periodical variations in wheat-production costs. I mention this only as being some indication that there are grounds for believing that an inquiry

into the cost structure of the wool industry is desirable. I should say, too—whether or no it is proposed to go into the question of stabilisation, as has been suggested in a previous motion carried in this House—we should, because it is eminently desirable—I am assured of this—know what the cost structure of this industry is and be in a position, therefore, to assess its situation more accurately than we have ever been able to do in the past; except, perhaps, for a short period after the wool inquiry sat in 1932.

I think that that committee examined a great many facets of the situation other than actual costs. The members of the committee had, in the course of the testimony, many proposals brought before them in regard to the wool industry at that time; and in their report they very carefully reviewed the majority of those proposals.

Among other things, they suggested something which I believe has never actually been done, and which might have been decidedly advantageous had it been done—I refer to the setting up of an Australian wool executive. It might be worth while to name the proposed personnel of that body, because I think it would have been something of value to the community, particularly the wool-growing community, had it been set up.

The committee also made reference to the evils that were imposed upon the wool-growers by the imposition of land tax which at that time of course, was both a State and a Federal imposition, except in Western Australia where there was only a Federal tax in respect to land over a value of £5,000, the State tax having been removed the previous year by the Mitchell-Latham Government. In addition, the committee also made reference—which I will quote in a moment or two—to the fact that the methods used by the Press in regard to the reporting of prices received at wool sales were not those that were likely to give the public a true picture of the position.

I suggest that that situation has not changed in more recent times, because the position is still, as hon. members will find if they read the Press, that the prices quoted are only the highest prices received at the sale, usually in respect of some small number of bales of wool of a distinctive or specialty type; whereas, as the committee pointed out very strongly, the only real criterion is the average price of the clip, taking into consideration all types of wool, including bellies, pieces and the like.

The committee made a recommendation suggesting that the Press should give more information to the public on average prices, believing it was more desirable than the system which had been followed. But it appears to me that the same system is being followed today; because if one reads the daily Press, one finds that generally

the quotation reads something like this—"The best price was 59d. obtained for five bales from Mr. A.B.C. of Kojonup."

To obtain the average price, one has to wait until the brokers publish the results in the "Farmers' Weekly", which has a very limited circulation; and it is not to be found in the daily Press for the information of the public. I can only hope that the Press of Australia—I am not particularising in this matter—will be kind enough to read the report of this committee and see what it had to say on this particular subject.

At that time—in 1932—the committee also found that the cost of production of wool in Australia was 14d. a lb.; and included in it was an allowance of 4½d. for interest, whether interest actually paid by the woolgrower, or interest on the capital value of the assets which were in use. Including that figure, the cost of production was assessed by the members of the committee at 14d. a lb.

But let us consider the value of 14d. then as against the value of money today. I suggest that it would be necessary to have at least 60d. in order to arrive at the same figure, so far as the actual purchasing power or value of the sum is concerned. I am absolutely certain that the average price of wool in Western Australia today falls short of that figure by at least 20 per cent. if not more, because it is within the 40d. radius and not within the 50d. or 60d. radii at present.

Therefore there are grounds for saying that the present situation is probably worse, and certainly at least as bad from the point of view of the woolgrower, as it was at the time when this committee made its examination and report 26 years ago. That is not a very satisfactory state of affairs; and yet, as I think I said earlier on, there is no-one who can authoritatively tell us what the reasonable cost of production is of this all-important commodity at present.

There has been no change in the relative position of wool in the Australian economy. In 1932, as the committee pointed out, it was the backbone of all Australian industry. In 1958, it is still in precisely the same position. Every moment that passes, when the production of this particular commodity is less than reasonably profitable there is some sort of recession in some part of industry in Australia.

In short, the purchasing power of a very large section of the public, and therefore the employment and business opportunities of the whole of the public, have been very substantially affected. We have, rightly or wrongly, substantially built up the economics of Australia on the sheep's back; and, whether we like it or not, that is still the situation today. The unprofitable

nature of the wool industry to Australia at present—and I am convinced it is rapidly reaching, if it has not already reached that position—is having its effect, and will have its effect on other sections of the community.

As the hon. member for Roe said a little while ago, we are extremely fortunate at present, particularly in Western Australia, that there is some prospect of a very bounteous harvest. The figures quoted by the Minister some 24 or so hours ago indicate that it will be a record harvest—I sincerely hope it will be. That to some extent, particularly in this State, will counterbalance the effects that otherwise would have been felt; but it is unusual to get a season like we have had this year.

As we go about the country we can see how good the crops are in many districts; but we cannot expect that that state of affairs will continue for an indefinite period. We all hope it will be possible for it to continue; but climatic conditions and natural conditions being what they are, and judging from past experience, we know that there is a considerable fluctuation from year to year. A season such as we are having now, and a crop such as we expect, is a rarity. Therefore it is extremely fortunate that during this particular period we have the situation to which the hon. member for Roe referred, and to which I have been referring in the last moment or two.

It is to be hoped that, while those concerned, to a very large extent anyway, are carrying on and benefiting from the bounteous harvest, an improvement will take place in the position of woolgrowing. Let us not forget also that a great number of people are engaged in agricultural pursuits in Western Australia who are not able to participate in this bounteous harvest, because they do not and cannot go in for grain-growing for sale. In other places, notably in the pastoral areas, woolgrowing and sheepraising are the only sources of income; and in consequence the crop position, no matter how good it may be, cannot improve the position of those people.

They are a very substantial portion of our woolgrowing community and are responsible for a large share—a larger share than their numbers would warrant because of the considerable size of their production—of Australia's wool clip. Therefore they must at present be always in our thoughts when this matter is before us, irrespective of any temporary or other relief which those engaged in the agricultural districts might find from wheat-growing or the growing of other grain crops.

So it seems to me that on quite a number of counts it is desirable that the Commonwealth Government, or the Agricultural Council itself if it feels it is equipped with

sufficient authority—which I believe it would be—should set up an authoritative inquiry along the lines I have suggested. There would be ample scope for it, and I am sure there would be a warm welcome to such an inquiry from the great majority of those engaged in woolgrowing.

The strongest representations have been made to me that it is desirable that such an inquiry should take place, and in the near future. I suggest that some of those who have made representations to me have done so because they wish to know, as I said earlier on, just what the economic set-up of this industry is.

Others, and just as bona fide because they believe it is a necessary corollary or fundamental proposal to any suggestion for the stabilisation of the industry—which ever line of thought they have they are equally bona fide—believe that such an inquiry should be held so that first-rate and collated information can be available not only to the woolgrowers themselves, but also to the general public and those who are interested directly or indirectly in wool production.

I do not think I need labour this question. I have already pointed out the basis on which the inquiry was made in 1932. I have indicated that some suggested that the Federal Government of the day should set up a Royal Commission. That may be considered desirable at present. In my view, that is a matter for determination by the authorities when they have arrived at a decision on the subject. As far as I am concerned I would be content either with a committee such as was set up and authorised in 1932, or with one having wider powers, in the nature of a Royal Commission, if that was considered necessary.

I think one of the difficulties which that committee faced in 1932—namely, that it could not get information of a satisfactory character from the smaller properties—is unlikely to arise today. Times have changed very considerably in that regard over the intervening period. Today there is no doubt whatever that the majority of farmers keep satisfactory records of their transactions. They have been obliged to do so, because of the changed incidence of taxation and of other aspects of their business over the last 15 or 20 years. Therefore there will be no difficulty in getting the information.

That is the reason why I suggested there should be a separate inquiry into agricultural and pastoral costs—so that there should be a proper review of the position of that industry in Australia at the present time. Those are the few observations I wish to make in support of the motion I moved.

On motion by the Hon. L. F. Kelly (Minister for Agriculture), debate adjourned.

WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLERS.

Proposals for Assistance.

Debate resumed from the 15th October on the following motion by the Hon. A. F. Watts:—

That as the financial position of a number of war service land settlers is precarious and becoming more difficult, this House is of the opinion—

- (1) that the Government should take prompt action to ensure that the statement of the Deputy Director of War Service Land Settlement made to the 1957 Honorary Royal Commission be given effect;
- (2) that the method by which such statement should be given effect should be that the excess liability be written off each year, the excess liability being the difference between the income derived from the property, having due regard to its management, and the total of—
 - (a) working expenses;
 - (b) a reasonable standard of living; and
 - (c) annual obligations in respect of structural improvements, stock and plant loans repayments, interest and rent;
- (3) that the Government should give early consideration to the appointment of an advisory committee, on which there are at least two practical farmers to review difficult cases; and
- (4) that the Government should make immediate arrangements for the Federal Minister to make an early visit to Western Australia to examine the position at first hand and to make any policy decisions requisite to give complete effect to the above.

THE HON. L. F. KELLY (Minister for Lands—Merredin-Yilgarn) [6.2]: The Leader of the Country Party based this motion on the ground that the financial position of many of the war service land settlers is very precarious at present and is worsening. I presume that he has in mind those chiefly depending on the production of wool for their main source of income. In that regard I can agree with him in saying that the plight of many growers is very serious; and unless there is a decided change, the future of the growers will become uncertain.

This circumstance is by no means confined to war service land settlers. The returns derived by woolgrowers generally

throughout the State are dangerously low—that is, based on the low market value of wool at present. I think it can be said that the two years' decline in the price to such a drastic degree must give us food for a great deal of thought as to remedial measures, in an endeavour to combat the very low price which wool is realising today.

The Leader of the Country Party has referred to the position in which the State is likely to find itself in regard to the very bountiful harvest in the present season. At this stage there is every indication that the State will realise a production in wheat somewhere in the proximity of the figure I gave to the House last night. In fact, some quarters consider that the production of this State might even exceed the present estimate, if conditions are favourable from now to the end of the ripening season.

Having in mind that there is a possibility of a greater quantity of grain being retained on farming properties during this season for the purpose of sowing larger areas next year, the feeling is that it is difficult to arrive at a close estimate of wheat being reserved for this purpose. In consequence, the production figure of 58,000,000 bushels could be considerably increased.

This State is very lucky this year in that there is a distinct possibility of establishing an all-time record for wheat production. If we realise in the vicinity of 58,000,000 bushels of wheat, it will mean that under the price guaranteed to the wheat producers an extra amount of approximately £20,000,000 of spending power will be placed in the hands of those producers. That is a very considerable figure. If that turns out to be the case, what now appears to be a very difficult position for woolgrowers will be improved very greatly.

In my view, the difficulties confronting woolgrowers are likely to remain, unless the cost of production recedes very rapidly. Hon. members will recall that in the years when the price of wool soared very quickly, all the attendant costs of production in that industry rose just as sharply. We invariably find that the producer carries such increased costs long after a recession has taken place in regard to the price of the commodity he is marketing.

Whilst the price of wool is very low, and the wool industry must be regarded as being in a serious position, if we could bring about a considerable reduction in the costs of production and marketing in as quick a manner as wool prices rose during the flush period, the severe effects brought about by the difference in the price of wool today and that of two years ago would be softened to a great extent.

Mr. May: The Federal Treasurer said there was no difference in the costs.

Mr. KELLY: I do not consider that the Federal Treasurer or anybody else who speaks in those terms has his feet on the ground.

Mr. May: That is what he suggested.

Mr. KELLY: I have not seen his statement. If he did make it, he was far from being factual, because we all know that the cost of production has risen very steeply. Many of the wool producers referred to by the Leader of the Country Party the other night are in a transitional stage of development and production. They have not yet reached the full stage of production, and they have not had the opportunity to reap the substantial benefits of the high prices which prevailed up till two years ago. For that reason they would feel the pinch to a greater extent than those producers who have had the opportunity of marketing their wool during the flush period.

The Leader of the Country Party devoted much of his speech to the dairying section of war service land settlement. He dwelt at length on the number of dairy farmers who have vacated their properties. He implied that the Classification and Allotment Board had not done a very good job.

Mr. Watts: If it has done a very good job, the conditions must have been very terrible. That was what I was saying.

Mr. KELLY: I shall endeavour to give a slightly different version to the one which the hon. member gave. He quoted figures which in some respects were quite correct.

Mr. Watts: Those figures were supplied in this House and ought to be correct.

Mr. KELLY: They are correct as far as they go until the hon. member reaches the stage of making an analysis. That is where the figures do not line up.

Mr. Watts: It seems to be a matter of simple arithmetic.

Mr. KELLY: The hon. member should accord me the same opportunity as I gave him of analysing the figures which he produced. During his address I did not utter a single interjection. I intend to illustrate the break-up of the figures which the hon. member quoted to this House.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: It is nice to be able to make a speech without interruption.

Mr. KELLY: I accord that opportunity on most occasions when hon. members are speaking, unless they make a statement which treads very much on my corns. Then I do interject. I sometimes do so in a semi-facetious manner. On the whole, I like to give every hon. member an opportunity of making a speech without interruption, thus enabling him to give sequence to his thoughts.

The Leader of the Country Party indicated to this House that 299 settlers were allotted farms, and of that number

only 197 are still in occupation; in other words, 102 settlers abandoned their farms. The hon. member had this to say—

I suggest that persons (a) who have applied for rehabilitation under the war service land settlement scheme; and (b) gone before the Classification and Allotment Board; and (c) applied for properties until they got one; and (d) established themselves for a period upon the property, are not going to relinquish it voluntarily unless they are satisfied that the future opportunities for themselves and their families are so negligible as to make it not worth their while to remain. I am convinced that, rightly or wrongly, it has been that point of view which has been substantially responsible for the voluntary vacation of these properties that has taken place. The process is not at an end.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. KELLY: Prior to the suspension I repeated to the House a statement which appeared in the speech of the Leader of the Country Party, in which he said that a very poor position had emanated from the activities of the Classification and Allotment Board in regard to its choice of dairy farms. A little earlier I stated that 102 of these abandoned farms were those which mostly concerned the Leader of the Country Party.

I think we ought to take a closer look at this position. The Leader of the Country Party, at one stage in his speech, stated that there were 102 abandoned farms, and he said that the abandonments were a cause for the gravest concern. It is not palatable to see properties abandoned, and I realise it is a cause for concern. However, I think the reasons for abandonment take on a very different construction when one delves closely enough to find out the actual position.

Instead of 102 farms being abandoned, I find that the file accounts for an extra 10. I am not going to attempt to analyse where the extra 10 came from; but since March, 1947, 112 farms have been listed as having been abandoned by the original holders. I think the House should know the rate at which these farms were abandoned. Six took place in 1949; ten in 1950; 15 in 1951, and 11 in 1952.

At this stage I would draw attention to the fact that the abandonments over those four years took place during the regime of the McLarty-Watts Government. Therefore, 46 per cent. of the abandonments took place during the term of office of that Government. Going on from there, we find that there were eight abandonments in 1953; 22 in 1954; 13 in 1955; 11 in 1956; 10 in 1957; and six to date this year. That makes a total of 112 abandonments.

Of these, 14 farmers did not leave their holdings voluntarily. Two were imprisoned for criminal offences; one was foreclosed by the Rural & Industries Bank—he was not a war service settler—and the remainder were put off for incompetence and serious misconduct. The remainder come under a number of headings, as a dissection has been made as to what occurred to the different persons who occupied dairy farms; and included in this number, for one reason or another, are the 102 dairy farmers about whom the Leader of the Country Party is concerned. I have the names of these farmers, but I do not propose to disclose them unless any hon. member thinks he can recognise a particular case.

Quite a number of these allottees had farms for a short period: some for 15 months in 1948; 13 months in 1948; again 13 months in 1948; three weeks in 1949; again three weeks in 1949; five weeks in 1950; four weeks in 1950; five weeks in 1951; eight weeks in 1951; again eight weeks in 1951; and two weeks in 1952. From that period onwards the period of occupation in almost every case was 12 months or more, and in some cases eight or nine years. Those figures show that quite a number of dairy farmers hardly got their feet dusted on the farm before they left.

In turning to the reasons why many of these farms were vacated, we find that under the evicted section, misconduct appears quite frequently. Some evictees had convictions for stealing; some were evicted for incompetence; and on one occasion an evictee was imprisoned for a criminal offence. In one case the Rural & Industries Bank foreclosed.

Still under the evicted section, but under the heading of "voluntary" we find that various farmers left their properties because of domestic troubles; illness of wife and illness of mother. One chap left his property to manage a farm in the Eastern States, and another died. As a matter of fact, I think three or five of these farmers died in that period, and I can assure hon. members that they did not leave because they wanted to.

There are several other farmers whose wives caused them difficulty. One man left to join the Police Force, and another rejoined the A.M.F. because he considered that dairying was not going to help him. Another fellow left to manage a widowed sister's farm; another came into some money and retired and became one of the very treasured few in our community; another became ill, poor chap; another although he had the farm allotted to him, did not, even after three weeks, take possession—he never even reached the barrier, but gave in very early.

So we find that ill-health, and all sorts of things of that nature, contributed to the reasons for many of these chaps leaving their farms. No doubt there would

be some who were genuinely dissatisfied with the dairying industry as a means of livelihood. That is not hard to appreciate when it is realised that many had previously had only a little experience on a dairy farm. They had worked for someone else; and I think every hon. member will agree with me when I say that many chaps can be good and intelligent workers as long as they have someone over them; but when they are placed on their own resources, they do not prove to be good managers.

So much for many of the reasons that led to severance from the dairy industry of some of those who had properties allotted to them. The hon. member for Stirling went on to say—

As I have endeavoured to indicate, it seems to me that in view of the obligations of the Classification and Allotment Board, it must be assumed that the great majority, if not all, of those 90 who have vacated their properties voluntarily, were both competent and suitable. If we are going to form any other opinion, I suggest that we have to acknowledge that the board did not know its job.

I submit to this Chamber that it was not, under any circumstances, a case of the board not knowing its job. It knew its job all right. I am not going to claim that it made a 100 per cent. wise choice, because that, too, would be almost a physical impossibility when it is considered that these people are examined across a table. Although the evidence that is taken is supposed to be on oath, we quite frequently find that some considerable time after it has been submitted, and a decision with regard to allotment has been made, circumstances arise which prove that a percentage of undesirable people have found their way into the industry. That is applicable not only to the dairying industry, of course, but to any industry where suitability is gauged by examination.

I would point out, too, that these abandonments cover 10 years; and that is a long span of time. Only recently I heard in this Chamber the remark that circumstances alter cases; and that is quite true. Time irons out difficulties and opinions are changed; and it is only to be expected that that will occur in this industry, particularly as it is one which is not favoured. I think the hon. member for Vasse would agree with me in that regard; although, of course, he does not often agree with me.

This is a difficult industry, and for many years it has not had a smooth passage. Its problems have always been numerous, and it has taken pretty stout hearts to keep it flourishing and progressing. The Classification and Allotment Board might have erred, I think, on the generous side in

some of the selections it made; and perhaps as time wore on, it realised that a little leniency extended here, and a helping hand somewhere else, and so on, did not turn out in the best interests of the State or the allottees.

As I said a moment ago, this industry has never been considered a really attractive one, and that is indicated by the number of applications that have been received. There were 2,993 applications for wheat and sheep farms; but for dairy farms only 1,063 applications were received, and of that number many were withdrawn before they were even examined. From these figures it will be seen that there is almost a three-to-one preference when it comes to a choice of property.

Let us now consider the financial commitment and working expenses repayments for 1957-58 in the dairying industry. The commitments due for that period were £48,559 10s. 7d.—that is, for the period just expired. Of those commitments, £40,892 10s. 3d. has been collected. This can be proved by a look at the files. There is no demur, or any argument against it. Of course, there are odd requests here and there for bigger reductions for some reason or other; but, by and large, there is very little in the way of complaint anywhere on the files. In 1957-58 we find that of the huge amount of money which became due, the arrears were only £7,667 0s. 4d.

What was the position the previous year? In 1956-57, the arrears carried over were only £2,108 7s. 6d.; and of that amount £1,994 3s. 7d. was paid before any payments were made during the year just concluded. Therefore, we find that at the beginning of this year, when commitments were put through, there were arrears of only £114 3s. 11d. left over to add to this year's commitments.

This year, too, super and insurance commitments totalled £21,641 10s. 7d. I am giving the exact figures because it is just as easy. Collected during this year on super and insurance was £21,101 6s. 5d. In other words the arrears totalled only £540 4s. 2d. That was all. And this is an industry that we are told is really suffering.

I would be the first one to go to its assistance quickly if I really felt that was the position, but the accounts do not disclose anything of the kind. The files do not reveal any worth-while complaints; only odd little ones. Naturally in a scheme of such magnitude, there would be some complaints, but none have come to hand which really indicate that these people are being harassed, and have not enough to keep body and soul together, or anything of that kind.

So we reach the point of analysing the total commitments for 1957-58. They amounted to £72,309 8s. 8d., of which £63,988 0s. 3d. was collected; so the total arrears for the two years, over all those farms, is £8,321 8s. 5d. In 1956-57 the

collection ratio was on the basis of 94 per cent., and in the year just passed an 89 per cent. collection was effected. I do not think these figures disclose a position to cause grave concern, and I believe the hon. member played on a word or two in order to make it appear that the industry is falling to pieces. I am not, under any circumstances, endeavouring to say that the industry has not suffered many difficulties over a period of years, or that it is not still in that position. The very fact that the Commonwealth Government sees fit to contribute £13,500,000 to the industry as a subsidy shows that it is not as affluent as we would like it to be.

There were some other comments by the hon. member, in regard to the butterfat position, on which I will give the House some figures in order that hon. members may have a better appreciation of what is actually happening. In this regard, the hon. member said that the level of 180 lb. or 200 lb. was not achieved on many W.S.L.S. dairy farms. He also said that the position was no good at that figure. If that is the case, on the figures which I have analysed as being the returns and receipts for the year, they must have had a terrific struggle getting that money from somewhere; but there is no indication that that has been the position.

The dairy farm herd testing records show reasonably good results in the average production per cow. I have had figures taken out and they give some indication of what is happening, not only in war service land settlement—because there are many of these people who are in this category—but throughout a great deal of the State. In 1946-47, under this herd testing scheme, there were 11,944 cows with an average return of 420 gallons of milk and 181 lb. of butterfat per cow. I mention that 181 lb., because that is the figure on which the Leader of the Country Party commenced his deliberations as to the availability of butterfat.

In 1952-53 there were 16,111 cows, with an average of 454 gallons of milk and a return of 193 lb. of butterfat per cow. In 1955-56 there were 13,861 cows, with 516 gallons of milk and 222 lb. of butterfat. In 1956-57 there were 13,226 cows, with 545 gallons of milk and 234 lb. of butterfat per cow. For 1957-58 there were 14,035 cows with 549 gallons of milk and 235 lb. of butterfat.

From the notes supplied to me I understand there were a number of W.S.L.S. dairy farmers on this testing scheme and that they are included in the averages which I have just given. Naturally some were very low yields and were on the herd testing scheme, while others were very high, and some of them surprisingly so. They supplied the figures, which were checked by the departmental machinery. Again, there are many W.S.L.S. dairy farmers who do not come under the

scheme and will not come into it. Notwithstanding the fact that in the allowances made to them in their general statements, and in the amount of money available to them, there is an allowance made for them to come under the scheme, they will not do so, as they prefer to remain away from it.

The hon. member for Harvey was at Wokalup with me only a few days ago, and he would realise the high standard that has been attained there. The management showed us some charts, and, although a few questions were asked, there is no reason to disregard the set of figures which we were given there and which showed 54 cows off the grass with an average of 324 lb. of butterfat, for the current season. Of course, this is a good season, with plenty of feed. The cows were mainly the progeny of heifers which were originally in the W.S.L.S. pool. After the whole of the requirements had been satisfied, and when refusals were occurring to take any of these cows, they were finally sent to Wokalup and it was the heifers from those cows that gave the results I have mentioned. I think that deals with the majority of cases submitted by the Leader of the Country Party.

I come now to the more technical side of the question and, with the background which I have and my opportunities in this department, I have naturally not been able to get a full and complete grasp of all the machinations of W.S.L.S. There is nothing more difficult—some members may not agree with me—than to come into a project that has been running for a number of years and, at the eleventh hour, endeavour quickly to pick up the whole of the transactions and happenings in that industry. I have discussed the wording of the motion with the director, with the manager and with officers of the department, and we got down to a basis of analysis. For the sake of accuracy, as I do not want anything misleading to be put into the minds of hon. members, I will read the majority of the replies to the points made by the Leader of the Country Party. In paragraph (1) reference is made to the statement of the Deputy Director of W.S.L.S. to the 1957 honorary Royal Commission. I find that the Deputy Director stated that each case would be considered on its merits to determine what adjustment of settlers' accounts was necessary in order to give sound prospects of success.

Further, he said, "I have not the slightest doubt that any proposal for the writing back of capitalisation and adjustment will be very favourably considered if submitted to the Commonwealth." There is no doubt about that score. These statements were in reply to questions when dealing with what has been referred to as the assessment scheme for determining commitments payable by settlers, which

were based upon the productivity of their farms, and which received very careful scrutiny by the Royal Commission.

I would like to point out that the assessment policy for determining commitments was initiated by the Land Settlement Board in Western Australia and accepted by the Commonwealth, and from its very nature it is a great protection to settlers as it permits a variation from year to year owing to circumstances over which the settler may have little control, and of which an instance would be the price of produce. This assessment of commitment is regarded by the Land Settlement Board as the basis upon which the building up of the productivity of farms is achieved, after the granting of the lease conditions; and it is an incentive, particularly to the industrious settler.

At this stage I would like to quote extracts from the Royal Commission's report, presented in 1957, dealing with the assessment scheme, as I think hon. members should be reminded of the opinion of the commission. The commission said—

Evidence submitted that this scheme was not in the best interests of the settlers was apparently based upon a lack of knowledge of the procedure adopted.

The commission then dealt with the basis of the scheme on page 7 of the report and comments as follows:—

The commission considers that the principles of the assessment scheme are excellent and definitely in the interests of the settlers. It is further considered that, had such a scheme been in operation earlier many settlers would not be in the financial difficulties which they are experiencing today.

The commission further states—

With reference to the actual commitments payable under the assessment scheme, it was claimed by many witnesses that such were too high. The commission spent a considerable amount of time on this aspect having in mind that the W.S.L.S. department basis was related to an average settler on an average property, a basis which is considered by the commission to be quite fair and reasonable in view of the fact that the majority of the farmers on the assessment scheme are in project and dairy areas. The commission arrived at the conclusion that the real test of whether the amounts payable were too high would be an examination of the financial position of the farmers concerned and a check was made of a number of accounts. It was found that a large majority were not only meeting their assessed commitments but were also accumulating a fairly healthy credit, portion of which is represented in a farmer's equity in livestock.

It is our considered opinion that the computation of commitments payable under the assessment scheme is quite fair and equitable. It is stressed, however, that such commitments payable should continue to be calculated on a conservative basis.

Since that report was written in April, 1957, I have to be convinced that there has been any change in the fair and conservative approach towards the assessment of commitments. I will qualify that in this regard, that where wool and not dairying has been the prime income source the position could have changed very considerably, and undoubtedly would have changed, because of the varying price levels that wool has passed through in that time. The fall in the price of wool has necessitated a drastic revision of commitments which may be necessary for some settlers in grazing areas.

I think that all hon. members will agree that no hard and fast method of assessing commitments can be made which would be applicable to all farms. As the Deputy Director said in his evidence, "each case would have to be considered on its merits"; and that still stands good. It seems to me to be the only practical and fair means of determining commitments of an individual farm. On the 22nd September, 1958, it was necessary for the Deputy Chairman of the Land Settlement Board to interview the Director of War Service Land Settlement in Canberra. He discussed the possible implications of the fall in the price of wool with a view to continuing the present policy of assessed commitments. Hon. members would be aware that losses on established farms are borne entirely by the Commonwealth which, in the final instance, would determine the policy regarding the writing off of debts. But in the case of farms being developed, two-fifths of the losses are borne by the State and that, therefore, could reasonably have an influence in determining the disposal of losses.

It, therefore, can be said that action has already been taken regarding the first paragraph of the motion moved by the Leader of the Country Party; and I am not aware of what new action could be pursued. There was no suggestion in the motion as to what we could do; no helping hand was extended to tell us the right course to take other than a plea for more and more money. That is the only theme of the motions being moved in this House; the same applies to the motion moved by the Leader of the Country Party.

In regard to the second paragraph, which outlines the method to be adopted in the adjustment of settlers' accounts where, owing to a reasonable set of circumstances, the settler has been unable to meet his commitments, the present method of adjustment allows for working expenses, and an advance for a reasonable standard of

living, as well as a full plant loan, repayments with interest and rent being paid according to the productivity of the property. In view of the difficulty of forecasting a price for wool, the procedure to which the Commonwealth has agreed is that commitments will be based on the average price for the preceding season, this being the only known basis that can be adopted, and is adjusted at the end of the financial year if the lessee has not obtained those price levels through conditions beyond his control.

This is a realistic approach as the greater part of the year's activities has passed and expenditure incurred before realisations from the wool clip are obtained. The only point raised by the Leader of the Country Party is that all excess commitments over revenue realised, should be written off annually. In view of the fact that the lessee is not required to pay additional commitments if prices rise during the year, and the earning capacity of the farm is increased, it is considered reasonable to still hold such losses against the farm until the end of the established period.

I ask hon. members what would be the position if there was written into the Act a means whereby at the end of every season, whatever losses became apparent in the operation of the dairy farms were automatically written off. I suggest that there could be a measure of irresponsibility in regard to the activities of some people on properties; and there are many hon. members here, although they may not care to voice that sentiment, who would feel exactly as I do in this regard. The establishment period is when the property has reached the carrying capacity which normally would have enabled the settler to meet full commitments. Accumulated losses, if any, through trading, would then be reviewed in the light of any credits the lessee may have obtained by reason of the earning capacity of the farm being greater than that upon which the commitments had been assessed.

It has already been determined that if there should be debts at the establishment period, that is at the time of final valuation, they would be adjusted firstly by revenue commitments, including interest, being written off; and secondly, instalments against structural improvements capitalised. If, however, a fall in price was so disastrous that working expenses could not be met, the whole matter would need reconsideration by the Commonwealth as the position would then have deteriorated beyond the scope of the normal assessment policy. This policy fully protects the lessee while at the same time keeping some degree of equity as between the land settlement farmer and other farmers outside the war service land settlement scheme who, of course, have no guarantees whatever in the event of losses due to a drop in commodity prices.

In answering the suggestion contained in paragraph (3) of this motion that at least two practical farmers should be appointed to an advisory committee to review difficult cases, I would remind the House that the previous Government, of which the Leader of the Country Party was a member, appointed a land settlement committee with the object of having available the advice of practical farmers on the management of the scheme. That committee was set up by the previous Government and it is still in operation. Its personnel comprises three successful and practical farmers, all of whom have had experience in the development of farms and, from their own personal experience, they are aware of the difficulties involved.

For instance, the deputy chairman is a successful soldier settler from the first war, whose property has been regarded as an example of the means by which an infertile and badly run-down property can be built up into one of the most productive, for its size, on the Great Southern. This gentleman is also well known as a public figure. That is apart from his farming activities. Of course, some people may not like him, but I would remind the House that some people do not like me. We all have our likes and dislikes among the various people with whom we come in contact.

Mr. Bovell: We do not like your politics; that is all.

Mr. KELLY: The deputy chairman of the Land Settlement Committee was also the chairman of the Narrogin Road Board for some years. The hon. member for Narrogin must be pleased to hear that. The second member of the board—the nominee of the R.S.L.—

Mr. Cornell: He was also a member of the Country Party.

Mr. KELLY: Yes, exactly. That member of the committee has had experience both as a field officer of the original Agricultural Bank, and as a practical and successful farmer. A third member has had experience as an officer of the original Agricultural Bank, and has developed successfully a property in the Boyup Brook area. Many hon. members in this House know that property as well as I do. All these men have proved their qualifications as practical farmers and they are thoroughly conversant with the conditions and problems of the war service land settlement scheme.

I cannot see any merit in permanently appointing a further two practical farmers in an advisory capacity. The settlers are already well represented. Those officers were appointed by the previous Government and they have continued in office during the term of this Government. Therefore, there is no reason why two more farmers should be loaded on to a committee of this nature.

In referring to paragraph (4) of the motion, I point out that the Commonwealth Minister for Primary Industry, who administers the war service land settlement scheme, is fully aware of the position in this State. I know that gentleman quite well and I meet him frequently. Decisions on details of administration are made by the Director of War Service Land Settlement acting in accordance with the policy of the Commonwealth. The Act is not in accordance with the policy of this Government, but in accordance with the policy, laid down hard and fast, by the Commonwealth Government in the articles of agreement on the war service land settlement scheme. The director visits Western Australia periodically.

Mr. Nalder: But that is not the Minister.

Mr. KELLY: No, but the director and the Minister are closely in touch with each other. Their views are aligned and one is the mouthpiece of the other on many occasions. He has a deputy director of war service land settlement in this State on a permanent basis, and where problems cannot be determined by the Commonwealth deputy director locally, either the chairman or the deputy chairman consults the director in Canberra to expedite urgent decisions.

I have no objection to the Minister for Primary Industry visiting Western Australia, but I am unable to agree that there is any necessity for him to do so other than for me to have the pleasure of showing him what has been achieved in some of our districts which have been successfully developed. Following on the complaints which have been expressed in this House to my predecessor and on the many occasions on which dissatisfaction has been expressed to me, I expressed a desire to visit the various districts to hear the complaints first-hand. So, again following the deputation led by the hon. member for Katanning and the Leader of the Country Party, which met me in Perth to put forward many complaints, I said that I would be prepared to visit the various war service land settlement districts to inspect the properties myself.

In accordance with custom I notified those two hon. members of the time and date which would be most opportune for me to meet the settlers who were in difficulties and who required a great deal of attention. I spent four days with them and I interviewed many settlers. There were a few complaints but several were ironed out on the spot by explanations given by the Director of War Service Land Settlement. Many of the settlers expressed their satisfaction at having their complaints and points of difference settled at first hand.

I do not think I would be wrong in saying that when the two hon. members who accompanied me returned to Perth

they were quite satisfied with what had transpired during this trip and yet, despite that, pinpricks, such as are represented by this motion, are made from time to time. I think the motion by the Leader of the Country Party should not be passed by this Chamber because its terms do not reflect the true position of the war service land settlement scheme. I feel certain that hon. members must be convinced that in an analysis of the calculations that were made concerning this question when the motion was introduced, although there was much that was factual, there was a great deal that was remiss.

MR. BOVELL (Vasse) [8.18]: This motion has been moved in an endeavour to solve the problems of war service land settlers. Thirteen years have now passed since the cessation of hostilities, and it is alarming to learn that the position in war service land settlement districts is unsatisfactory. We all know that any land settlement scheme has its problems and, in principle, the war service land settlement scheme was, to all intents and purposes, ideal.

The fact remains, however, that many of the settlers are facing grave difficulties today and it is not the past we are concerned with, but the present. With the fall in wool prices, there is no doubt that a motion of this nature is timely, because whatever prosperity the war service land settlers on wheat and sheep properties have enjoyed in the past, their position must now be reviewed in the light of altered circumstances.

I consider that those war service land settlers who have occupied wheat and sheep properties for a number of years should be better equipped financially to face present-day problems than those who have been operating dairy farms. So, although the main theme that I want to propound concerns the problem of dairy farmers, I believe that the future for wheat and sheep war service land settlers demands some consideration now and we should not let the position drift to allow those farmers to become financially involved.

The Leader of the Country Party, in outlining the objects of his motion, dealt with the difficulties of dairy farmers at considerable length. In doing so he pointed out that many dairy farmers on war service land settlement holdings have vacated their properties and the position has now become alarming. As I have indicated, dairy farmers under the war service land settlement scheme have not enjoyed the buoyant conditions in regard to prices which the war service land settlers in the wheat and sheep areas have. I understood the Leader of the Country Party to say that, of the 299 war service land settlers who had been allotted dairy farms, 102 had left their properties for one reason or another.

The Minister has questioned the figures produced by the Leader of the Country Party, but I was not convinced by the arguments submitted by the Minister, and I propose to adhere to the figures given by the Leader of the Country Party. Of the number quoted, 13 had been evicted for one reason or another, and the Minister indicated to the House the reasons why some of these persons had been evicted. But 89 of the number quoted had left voluntarily. That is an alarming figure out of a total of 299. As I represent a dairying district, I come in close contact with war service land settlers on dairy farms, particularly in the Karridale area, and I must say that the position that has developed this year has caused grave concern.

Dairy farmers who are war service land settlers, and who have been on properties for upward of ten years, have informed me this year that they have no alternative but to vacate their properties. Over the years they have endeavoured to establish themselves, but for one reason or another the position has become hopeless, and accordingly they intend to vacate the properties they have been endeavouring to develop over the past ten years. The object of the war service land settlement scheme was to give men who had served their country at war, and who had given years of service away from civilian conditions, an opportunity of rehabilitating themselves in an industry in which they had some experience.

Any Government, or any Parliament, must feel it a responsibility to give these settlers a chance. In my opinion, the motion of the Leader of the Country Party is designed for that purpose. I cannot understand why the Minister immediately adopts the offensive when any move is made from this side of the House to assist primary producers, whether they be war service land settlers or not. During this session of Parliament we have had a number of motions from this side of the House concerning primary industries, and on each and every occasion the Minister has either wiped them off completely or amended the motion so as to make its original intention contrary to the purpose for which it was moved, if he has not opposed the motion outright. The motions that have been moved in this regard have not been submitted as censure motions, but in a true spirit of co-operation with the Government in order to make it realise that the primary industries in this state need attention, assistance and guidance by a sympathetic Government.

The figures quoted by the Leader of the Country Party in regard to war service settlers on dairy farms indicate the hopeless position in which farmers with a 35-cow herd are placed. I think the figure given showed that the gross income was £1,655 from a milking herd of 35 cows,

which included some receipts for the sale of pigs. Living expenses and working expenses being what they are, the position, as indicated by the Leader of the Country Party, is that it is quite impossible for a dairy farmer under the war service land settlement scheme to continue operating on a sound financial basis.

I know that in my own district, other dairy farmers outside the war service land settlement scheme are having great difficulties because of the prices and conditions that have prevailed in the dairying industry over the past few years. It is essential that we continue to develop our dairying industry. The Premier and the Government have advocated the buying of local products, but I have pointed out before in this House that during the last financial year, to the 30th June, 1958, we imported 54,000 boxes of butter from the Eastern States. I believe that our dairying industry should be built up to a standard that would at least provide our home consumption requirements, and to do this it is necessary to have a sympathetic Minister, and a sympathetic Government, able to understand the problems confronting the dairy farmers.

The Minister gave a long address, and I listened very attentively, and carefully to it; but in the whole of the time he was speaking he never indicated to me one way in which the Government proposed to bring individual settlers, or the industry collectively, out of the impasse into which they have fallen.

Mr. Sleeman: You would be hard to convince.

Mr. BOVELL: No. I would be quite easy to convince if the proposals indicated that the Government was concerned for the welfare, not only of the individual settler, but of the industry as a whole. The position needs very careful handling and attention. The Minister drew a red herring across the trail and took us to Wokalup. He quoted production figures, and although I was not present on the day to which the Minister referred, he did bring into his discussion the name of the hon. member for Harvey. I would say, however, that the conditions in the Wokalup-Harvey area are quite different from those that prevail where war service land settlers are developing farms. I say that because the Wokalup-Harvey area is an irrigation district and, accordingly, the production of butterfat and whole milk are totally different from their production under the conditions that prevail in the Denmark, Narrikup, Karridale and Augusta areas.

Mr. I. W. Manning: There is absolutely no comparison.

Mr. BOVELL: I thank the hon. member for Harvey for that interjection, because it confirms my line of thought that the production figures quoted by the Minister are for dairy herds in irrigation areas

where the conditions are completely different from those that apply where the war service land settlers are facing these difficulties. The purpose of this motion, in my opinion, is to try to do something to help keep the dairy farmers operating their farming properties. With the rate of wastage which has prevailed over the years, it is no use comparing one Government with another.

Mr. May: We did not do that.

Mr. BOVELL: The hon. member must have been absent from the Chamber when the Minister did so, because the Minister quoted evictions year by year from 1948 until 1957.

Mr. May: He did not blame your Government.

Mr. BOVELL: He drew comparisons. I did not say he blamed anybody. It is no good dealing with the past. This motion is designed to deal with the present. If this Government tries to shelve its responsibility altogether, and to throw the responsibility on the Commonwealth Government, it is not living up to its undertaking, because the administration of the war service land settlement scheme is controlled by the State Government, and not the Commonwealth Government. The administration is therefore the responsibility of the Minister for Lands and of the Government to which he belongs.

I was rather interested to hear the Minister quoting figures to show that dairy farmers had not complained in any way in regard to their commitments, and that their returns showed they were accumulating funds. That is entirely contrary to the information which I have received firsthand from dairy farmers in my district. I hope the Minister will reconsider his views on this matter.

It is quite unfair, especially to dairy farmers who are endeavouring to carry on under extreme financial hardships, for the Government by words in this House to brush off any effort made by members on this side of the House, who are directly in contact with the war service land settlers concerned, to improve their lot.

I hope the House will view the position of these settlers as it stands, and not as it was in the past, and that it will realise the financial position which many of them are facing. I would emphasise this point: The original intention of the war service land settlement scheme in regard to dairy farms was that farms should be on a 40-cow basis. To my knowledge that objective has not been reached. The real position is that dairy farmers under the war service land settlement scheme in this State have been struggling with 20 to 35 milking cows, and the odds of success are completely against them. Furthermore, the position of pastures, clearing and water supplies, which the Royal Commission investigated thoroughly, is not up to the required standard in most cases.

The Minister did not deal in any way with the objective of bringing these properties up to a 40-milking-cow basis. I would have preferred him to quote figures showing the percentage of dairy farms under this scheme which have not reached the 40-cow standard. In my experience there are very few, if any, of these dairy farmers who are now operating on what can be termed a living standard—that is the 40-cow basis.

This House should agree to the motion before us, because it is timely and necessary to do so. If war service land settlers are to receive any encouragement at all they should be told that Parliament is behind them and is trying to do something to assist them to increase rural production and development.

MR. NALDER (Katanning) [8.35]: I intend to support the motion before us, because I believe it can bring forward nothing but good. Probably the Minister is wondering how that could be. I have taken a keen interest in war service land settlement in this State right from its inception. On several occasions I have been responsible for moving in this House motions which I believe have brought considerable benefit to war service land settlers in this State. I believe that a constant review of war service land settlement can do nothing but improve the position of the settlers.

No doubt problems will arise from time to time. The Minister has admitted that in his speech. I believe it is the responsibility of Her Majesty's Opposition to bring these matters before the Government, whether or not the Government likes it.

Mr. Brand: The Government did that often when it was over here.

Mr. NALDER: It lived up to its responsibilities. I believe we should do likewise to air our point of view.

Mr. Lawrence: Members opposite have done that for a long time.

Mr. Roberts: The Government will get plenty of opportunity for doing the same after the next elections!

Mr. NALDER: It is not my intention to speak at length, because I have already aired my views on several occasions previously. However, there are one or two matters to which I wish to make reference. I do not intend to deal with the first three points of the motion, but in regard to the fourth point the action referred to should have been taken by an interested Minister in the Commonwealth Government long before now. There has not been one Federal Minister in charge of war service land settlement, who has visited Western Australia for the purpose of inspecting the properties here.

Mr. Sleeman: The hon. member for Vasse was well behind the Federal Minister.

Mr. NALDER: Not one Federal Minister in either the present or the previous Government has done that. I contend that the Federal Minister in charge of these matters should be sufficiently interested to come to this State and inspect the war service properties.

It was stated by the Minister for Lands that the Federal Minister has his mouthpiece in the State. It is only right that such representation should exist. It must be remembered that the people of this State did their share in the war effort, and the returned servicemen are entitled to receive assistance on the same basis as the settlers in the other States. I hope that what I am saying will be conveyed to the Federal Minister. I hope he will be persuaded to come over to this State so that he can be shown around the war service land settlement properties.

A considerable amount of confidence would be created in Canberra and among war settlers in this State if the Federal Minister made periodic visits to Western Australia to hear the complaints of settlers. I commend the Minister for Lands for what he said tonight. It is quite true that when a deputation of the central executive of the war service settlers waited on him in March, he agreed to look at the situation and to listen to their complaints. That was one of the best things he could have done, and he should do it more often.

Mr. May: It is a pity the Minister in the previous Government did not do so.

Mr. NALDER: We cannot go back to that time and I do not intend to. With your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer to a certain matter at this stage. When the House rose last year, somebody suggested that, as a climax, a boxing match might be held at Subiaco Oval and one of the bouts of interest would be between the Minister for Lands and the hon. member for Katanning.

Mr. Norton: You would be under weight, I think.

The SPEAKER: You would not expect me to referee that one.

Mr. NALDER: I thought, Sir, that you might.

Mr. Hawke: I do not think Leo Leavitt would be interested in promoting that one.

Mr. NALDER: When the then Minister saw that announcement on the notice board he said he would rather take me around places in England at a later date than adopt the suggestion on the notice board.

Mr. Bovell: Perhaps that is why he accepted the office of Agent-General.

Mr. NALDER: All this is by the way. I want to say what a considerable amount of difference it makes to the war service land settlers, or any other group of people, for that matter, when the Minister who is in charge of the department takes an interest in the people with whom he has to deal. I am quite sure that the visit of the Minister to the Great Southern during the early part of the year did a lot of good, because quite a number of problems were ironed out on the spot and the Minister was able to see conditions for himself. I know that we stayed at one property until about 8 p.m., discussing problems of the settlers, and the Minister promised to have them investigated. To my knowledge, some of these have been ironed out to the satisfaction of the settlers concerned. Some problems still remain and I will have more to say about them later on.

Mr. Kelly: They are very little ones.

Mr. NALDER: Whether the Minister thinks they are little ones or not, they are important. Anything which involves the success or failure of an individual is important.

Mr. Kelly: Yes, it is.

Mr. NALDER: When a man has spent eight or ten years of his lifetime trying to mould a farm in order to make provision for his family, I feel sure you will agree, Mr. Speaker, that his success or failure is important. That is the reason why the Leader of the Country Party has brought this matter before the House.

I am alarmed at the figures which have been quoted. I believe the Minister stated that 102 or 112 dairy farmers have left their properties over a period of eight or ten years. I think that number is alarming.

Mr. Bovell: When compared with 299.

Mr. NALDER: It is a matter that must be investigated from every angle to see if this drift away from dairy farms can be stemmed. I know that those engaged in mixed farming—with sheep, wool and wheat—who were the first to be settled on their properties, are satisfied. They are progressively getting better and better established and are building up an asset, not only for themselves but for the State. From time to time it has been stated that a lot of war service land settlers are thinking only of themselves. They have to think of themselves. If some of the statements made here from time to time were noted, there would be a change of opinion. Many of these men are successful and are continuing to build up an asset. We have to see that that state of affairs continues, not only in connection with wheat and sheep properties but in regard to all the activities of war service land settlement.

I want to refer to a matter which has already been mentioned in this House. I intend to emphasise it further, because

it is vitally important. I am sure many hon. members on the other side of the House do not realise what is happening as a result of certain regulations which have been brought down. I want to read portion of an article from "The Listening Post," dated October, 1958, which refers to the equity of a deceased war service land settler's family when a settler dies before he is in a sound financial position.

Apparently this regulation was gazetted recently, although I do not know when it was brought into effect. First of all, properties apparently were on a leasehold basis for 99 years and a property could pass to a settler's son or to other members of his family. However, if I read this article aright, that is not the case; and I want to know what the position is going to be. The article, which is headed "Rights under Wills" is as follows:—

Mr. Barrett—

He is Deputy Chairman of the W.S.L.S. Board.

—said that under the regulations of the War Service Land Settlement Scheme Act the widow of a settler was eligible to receive the benefits of the scheme in respect of the holding held by her husband at the time of his demise.

The benefits were not extended to any other relatives, for it was the ex-serviceman or his wife who was entitled to the Commonwealth rehabilitation benefit. Adult sons or daughters were not entitled to rehabilitation in respect of their father's war service.

Should the holding have been willed by the lessee to a person other than his widow, the perpetual lease could be transferred to him (or her) but only after the moneys loaned in respect of the holding had been repaid to the Crown.

What an impossible position that is, if I interpret it properly!

Mr. Watts: That is the position and I drew attention to it on the Address-in-reply.

Mr. NALDER: Under the present circumstances, if a farmer dies and owes the War Service Land Settlement Department £15,000 and there is a boy aged 18, 19, or 20 years, where is that boy going to find £15,000 to pay off his father's obligations? Hon. members on this side of the House, and war service land settlers throughout the State were under the impression, until reading this regulation, that the children would be able to follow in their fathers' footsteps.

Mr. May: Whose regulation is it?

Mr. NALDER: Your guess is as good as mine.

Mr. Watts: It was made in 1954.

Mr. NALDER: Apparently the State agreed to it, anyway. I believe the position is very serious, and I will be amazed if the returned men are going to sit down and tolerate it. We will not be regarded as responsible members if we allow this state of affairs to go unheeded. I hope the Minister will be able to give an explanation of the position and say what consideration can be given to it. Should a farmer and his wife die, their son, as heir, should have a lawful right to take possession of the property. He can come into possession if he finds the money to pay the war service land settlement scheme. I believe that is an impossible position.

Mr. Kelly: The regulation you referred to is a Commonwealth one.

Mr. NALDER: I do not know whether it is or not; but it must have been agreed to by the State, because Mr. Barrett has mentioned it, as I just read out. It is quite clear. Hon. members can read it for themselves.

Mr. Hawke: We administer the Commonwealth scheme.

Mr. NALDER: The State must have agreed to it.

Mr. Hawke: We administer the scheme for the Commonwealth.

Mr. NALDER: Does not the State have any say at all? The Premier cannot convince me on that point. I can be convinced on many points, but not on that one. The State Government has a responsibility here—

Mr. Hawke: To administer the Commonwealth scheme.

Mr. NALDER: The State Government has a say.

Mr. Hawke: No say to override the Commonwealth regulation.

Mr. NALDER: That is all the more reason why the Minister should come here and discuss it.

Mr. Hawke: I quite agree.

Mr. NALDER: As the Premier has agreed, I hope the situation will not exist without—

Mr. Brady: Why don't you move to ask the Minister—

Mr. NALDER: That is already in the motion. If the Minister for Police would like to take the trouble to read the motion he would find in it a reference to the Federal Minister. I know he has been sitting there very patiently, so I will read the relevant paragraph to him. It is as follows:—

- (4) that the Government should make immediate arrangements for the Federal Minister to make an early visit to Western Australia to examine the position at first hand

and to make any policy decisions requisite to give complete effect to the above.

Mr. Kelly: You invite the Minister to come!

Mr. Brady: The hon. member should move that way.

Mr. NALDER: It is already in the motion.

Mr. Kelly: You know that the Minister has been invited to come to Western Australia for the last two agricultural conferences.

Mr. NALDER: He has been invited?

Mr. Kelly: He has; but on each occasion he has just not been able to come.

Mr. NALDER: The third time might be lucky.

Mr. Kelly: The third invitation has already been extended.

Mr. NALDER: Persist, and results might be achieved.

Mr. Evans: We might have a new Federal Minister after the 22nd November.

Mr. NALDER: If the Minister does come over, I would like him to see something—
Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! One at a time, please!

Mr. NALDER: I believe hon. members know exactly what the position is. I support the motion because the points outlined are worthy of consideration; and I feel that if passed, it could do nothing but good and would be in the ultimate interests of war service land settlers. As I said to the Minister, I appreciate that he has demonstrated his interest in the war service land settlers by visiting their properties. I repeat again that there are still problems, and quite a number of them, and I think there will continue to be.

Mr. Kelly: Why don't you enumerate these problems and let us know the real difficulties you are up against? You have not given us one. Enumerate them.

Mr. NALDER: Does the Minister for Lands mean to say that when he visited areas in the Great Southern he did not find any problems?

Mr. Kelly: They were all ironed out.

Mr. Watts: I gave you one. The development of the dairy farms to the required standard.

Mr. Kelly: You would need the resources of the Bank of England to meet your requests.

Mr. NALDER: I know some of the problems were ironed out; and, indeed, I said at the beginning that the Minister had gone on to the properties and discussed the difficulties with settlers and ironed some of them out.

Mr. Hawke: The settlers?

Mr. NALDER: No. Some of them are still carrying on. But there are still some problems, and I will be meeting the Minister before very long and will tell him some of them.

Mr. Kelly: Not the way you did the last time, I hope!

Mr. NALDER: The Minister has the feeling that everything is going good-oh; that these problems are things of the past; and that everyone is living happily ever after.

Mr. Kelly: I have always assured you that your problems would receive full attention and consideration, and that I would do everything for you that I could.

Mr. NALDER: I appreciate that from the Minister, and will be requesting more of him in the very near future.

THE HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling—in reply) [8.54]: In view of all that has been said by the hon. member for Katanning in regard to the regulations governing the transmission of deceased settlers' estates, I would like to point out that on the 14th August I drew attention to the matter when speaking on the Address-in-reply. The regulations are made under the State Act—the War Service Land Settlement Scheme Act of 1954—and were in the State "Government Gazette"; and when I traversed the matter here at some considerable length—which I do not wish to go into now—the Premier interjected and said—

It rather sounds as though the only next of kin who could do it would be one who is quite wealthy;

and I said—

That is how it appears to me, unfortunately.

Then I went on to refer to another aspect of the regulations, and I said this—

I do not want to see any unpleasantness or bitterness arise between the department and the people concerned when, I am sure, there is actually no need for it.

I was referring to a specific case which I thought was going to come under the notice of the department at that time. The Premier stated—

I will discuss the matter next week with the Minister for Lands.

I then thanked the Premier. That is on pages 138 and 139 of Hansard, of the 14th August last. And the situation is apparently just as it was at that time and comes now under the notice of the people who write the articles for "The Listening Post." But it is a most unfortunate and improper state of affairs, as the hon. member for Katanning states; and I hope that the Premier will now be able to bring himself to discuss the matter with the Minister for Lands; and if he does, I think he

will find the position is exactly as stated. But it can be amended with sweet reasonableness and made a satisfactory proposition to carry out what I think was the intention of the scheme in the first instance.

As I said before, I do not want to see any unpleasantness or bitterness. The situation should be examined in the light of reason, which I feel sure will be done now; and if so, I do not doubt that some better proposition will be submitted than is in the regulations at the present time.

I was extremely interested in some of the things the Minister has endeavoured to do with my speech this evening. He first of all apparently set out to try to prove that I said the classification of the allotment board was completely unsatisfactory—or words to that effect. I did nothing of the kind. What I said was that if, as was alleged by a lot of people, the 102 settlers who had left the war service land settlement dairy areas were no-hoppers, then obviously the Classification and Allotment Board must have made a great many mistakes.

But I did not agree with that, because I did not agree that they were no-hoppers. My view, like the hon. member for Vasse, is that the circumstances and conditions under which they had to work resulted in their being unable to face up any longer to those conditions and complications. Therefore, some of the people walked off voluntarily. Maybe, as the Minister said, one or two people left for health reasons and one or two grandfathers left fortunes, or whatever it was; but that does not account for the whole 100 by a long way.

Mr. Kelly: Forty-eight left in your own regime.

Mr. WATTS: That does not matter in the slightest degree. I have not brought up the question of whose regime was in existence. If the Minister can find any word of mine to the effect that his Government or he himself was responsible in regard to this matter, I should be extremely surprised; because I carefully kept away from angles of that kind to allow him to introduce them himself this evening.

The situation so far as I was concerned in that particular speech was that I was interested in conserving the rights of the remaining settlers and others who were only able to obtain revenue—or practically only able to obtain revenue—from wool production, and whose problems were going to be similar in the very near future unless a substantial alteration in the price of wool was received.

It does not concern me whether 46 per cent. of them walked off before 1953 and 54 per cent. since. The fact remains that 100 per cent. have walked off the properties altogether; and that is not a satisfactory state of affairs. It is one, I should say, which calls for definite remedial action.

The Minister also tried to create the impression, I thought—I hope I do not misjudge him—that I was dissatisfied with Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Kelly: I did not intend to imply that.

Mr. WATTS: I have considerable respect for Mr. Barrett. I think I can say I was one of those who helped to get him on to the War Service Land Settlement Board; but in the intervening period his status has changed considerably, and nobody objects to that, in the circumstances. I still have great respect for him; but he is now in an entirely different job from that which he had when first appointed. He is to all intents and purposes—he has been for a number of years—if not a civil servant, at least the equivalent of one, because he has continued on office duties and other duties in exactly the same way as a civil servant would in respect of the ramifications of the War Service Land Settlement Board, and he is no longer there in an advisory capacity.

I do not know what the position is in regard to Mr. Miller, who I think is the other man, and who was formerly an officer of the Agricultural Bank. I do not know whether he occupies anything like the situation that Mr. Barrett does; but certainly the situation and status of Mr. Barrett, so far as the War Service Land Settlement Board is concerned, are vastly changed since his appointment. I repeat that he is not now in the situation that he was in when first appointed; and, what is more, there is need, in my opinion, for the appointment of a person purely in an advisory capacity. But do not let it go on record that I have made any imputation of any kind against Mr. Barrett, because I have not done so.

It is true that everybody in war service land settlement does not look upon Mr. Barrett with favour; but who could expect a 100 per cent. favourable view with respect to any person? I do not claim to be viewed with 100 per cent. of favour, and I do not think the Minister or any other hon. member would claim it. There is always someone who does not like us, and that must be faced up to.

Mr. Bovell: As long as the majority like you, it is all right.

Mr. WATTS: That is so. If the majority like you, you are quite happy. The fact remains that no doubt there was a margin of error with Mr. Barrett, just like anybody else; but he has done his best, and my respect for him continues.

The Minister told us that of the commitments of £48,059 10s. 7d. in respect of the year ended the 30th June, 1958, in the dairying industry, £40,892 10s. 3d. was paid, and that only £7,000 odd was not paid; but he did not tell us under what strain, and with what heartburnings and difficulties, the £40,000 was paid. I venture to suggest it was not easily paid.

Mr. Kelly: I know how it was paid, and so does the hon. member.

Mr. WATTS: The point I have been trying to make is that the fullest amount possible has been extracted; and that the scheme has, over a big period of a year, the first charge on the returns and is in a good position to collect its dues. So it is surprising to me that it has not collected the lot, and that there is £7,000 odd outstanding.

Mr. Kelly: It is the milk of human kindness.

Mr. WATTS: No; it was the impossibility of performance. That is more like it. I would also suggest that if that amount is still outstanding, it is about time it was written off; because I do not think it should be carried forward to the next year to make an incubus around the necks of these people and thus induce more of them to walk off; and I am told that three or four more went last week—three in the Denmark district alone. One of them may have left for reasons other than the impracticability of remaining there and making a successful go of it, but the other two definitely left for that reason.

I would remind the Minister also that the imputation that a number of these people on the dairy farms were unsuitable was not mine; as a matter of fact it was the Minister's, although he quoted somebody else, because the imputation came from the report of the Select Committee in 1952, of which the Minister for Lands and his predecessor were both members. Referring to the dairy farms they said—

Mr. Barrett, when questioned on this, chose to blame the type of settler rather than the method of computing the board's assessments.

The committee took the view that no two farms were alike and that no two herds were alike, but the suggestion was there. I read this report before I made my opening remarks on this motion. Mr. Barrett chose to blame the type of settler; and so, naturally, I would make some direct or indirect reference to the type of settler when moving the motion, and would express the opinion that it was not the type of settler but that, if it was, then the Classification and Allotment Board could not have done its job satisfactorily.

I am satisfied, from my knowledge of the people on these properties at present, that they are very desirable people; and that, given a reasonable spin, they will ultimately make a success of their properties and relieve the State of some difficult problems. But if they are going to be niggled at and worried, as there is every indication that they will be unless there is some substantial improvement in their returns, there will be a further exodus; and it is that which I am anxious to avoid, just as I understood the committee in 1952 was anxious to avoid it then.

The tendency has increased since that time. It has not lessened; and on the Minister's own figures, it was 46 per cent. before 1953 and 54 per cent. since; and this report was made at the end of 1952, at the time when there was 46 per cent. of this exodus. But there has been 54 per cent. of it since that time—seeing that the Minister will go into the figures for those years—and if anybody is to blame for the problem it is in the last five years. That is another way of looking at it, which I think is nearer to the facts; because both these gentlemen—the present Minister and his predecessor—were subscribers to the report of this Select Committee which recommended all sorts of changes that have not been made.

Mr. Bovell: And they have been in a position to make them.

Mr. WATTS: That is so.

Mr. Kelly: What about the hon. member for Katanning?

Mr. WATTS: He has not been in a position to do anything but talk to the Minister and his predecessor, and he has done a lot of that in the last two or three years, both publicly and privately, as the Minister will admit.

The Minister, I think, indicated that there was no necessity to consider any reduction or writing down of obligations, because if prices increased the commitments would not increase. That might be one way of looking at it; but until prices increase and we have a deficit while the prices are not increasing, then is the time, it seems to me, to relieve them of the obligation; and if the prices do increase, and the position is so profitable that they could pay some more, then it might be reasonable to suggest that they do.

But while they cannot, I suggest they should be relieved of the obligations of being charged up with those things; and that is all I am seeking to achieve. The Minister's view that because, when prices increase, they are not asked to pay more that is a justification for charging them what is being charged now, when they cannot pay it, seems to me to be rather ridiculous.

I do not know that I need say any more on this subject. It is apparent to me that the Minister has not given a sufficient answer to the problem which I raised. His attitude has been mainly that everything in the garden is lovely.

Mr. Kelly: That was not said.

Mr. WATTS: There have been considerable changes in the returns for primary products, particularly of the two kinds I referred to in this motion, even since six months ago, when the Minister made the journey to the Great Southern to which he referred. At that time, in regard to wool, the price was approximately 6s. lb.; today it is about 3s. 6d. lb. Therefore the problem is quite

a different one from that which existed six months ago, and the things the Minister would be told by the people there today would be different from what he heard six months ago. There has been no improvement, but rather the reverse in the dairying areas.

As the Minister will admit, so far as the dairying section in my district is concerned, he was not able to go near Denmark, and he was able to spend only two hours in the Narrikup area. I do not blame him for that, because it was not his fault. He spent a long time on the job, and it is a big job. The time was running out as we got to Narrikup, and so he was not able to go to Denmark at all—there would not have been sufficient time.

As a consequence, he does not know what is going on in those areas to the same extent as he knows of the areas further north. I suggest to the Minister that anything I say is soundly based; and he had no opportunity of finding out anything, or of confirming it, because he had only a couple of hours—I freely admit, that was not his fault, because he did his utmost on that journey—and there were a lot of places to go to. Denmark was not included in the list. So he cannot know just what the sentiments are in the dairying districts.

I have had an opportunity of meeting these people since that time—as a matter of fact, during the last three weeks—and I know what their feelings are. The majority of them are not grumblers, but they are faced with apprehension and uncertainty. Such things do not bring out the best in mankind; when they are faced with those things they worry and, when they worry, their work is not 100 per cent. As a consequence, conditions do not become better; in fact, they become worse; and that, in my opinion, is what will happen unless the problem is solved. I submit the motion to the House.

Question put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes—18

Mr. Bovell	Mr. W. Manning
Mr. Brand	Sir Ross McLarty
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Court	Mr. Oldfield
Mr. Crommelin	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Roberts
Mr. Hutchinson	Mr. Watts
Mr. Lewis	Mr. Wild
Mr. I. Manning	Mr. Mann

(Teller.)

Noes—23

Mr. Andrew	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Bickerton	Mr. Molr
Mr. Brady	Mr. Norton
Mr. Evans	Mr. O'Brien
Mr. Hall	Mr. Potter
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. Heal	Mr. Rowberry
Mr. Jamieson	Mr. Sewell
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Toms
Mr. Lapham	Mr. May
Mr. Lawrence	

(Teller.)

ESPERANCE LAND.

Re-negotiation of Agreements for Development.

Debate resumed from the 15th October on the following motion by the Hon. D. Brand:—

That in the interest of maintaining confidence in the land development at Esperance and in the absence of any evidence of a plan to ensure the required progress by the Chase Syndicate of the development of the land held by them under the agreement, this House calls on the Government to take immediate steps to re-negotiate the agreement with members of the syndicate or any other interested persons, in order to take advantage of the present keen interest in land in this area.

MR. PERKINS (Roe) [9.18]: I listened with great attention to what the Leader of the Opposition had to say in moving the motion, and I also listened carefully to the Premier's remarks when he spoke to it. The Premier stressed, and I realise, the importance of dealing with this question in a temperate way at present in view of the difficulties which might be created if we made any extreme statements which could be misinterpreted in some quarters.

I realise that there are considerable difficulties, and that there has been a good deal of disappointment about the progress of development made by the Chase Syndicate at Esperance. I can recall stating, when the original agreement was being discussed by this House, that I considered too many people were oversimplifying the problem of developing a new area such as the Esperance plain. I can also remember the flood of letters and telegrams and the protests that were made to me of one kind or another from many people about my pessimistic attitude. Of course, it was not pessimistic, but merely realistic.

Anyone who has had considerable experience of primary production realises that even in areas that have rich soil there are always many unexpected problems which have to be met whilst experience is being gained on the best way to develop them. There are, of course, specific problems in developing large tracts of land similar to the Esperance plains where new techniques are being tried, such as the application of trace elements to the soil.

I have no doubt that the south coast area will become a rich province of the State. I have always held that opinion; and if the previous Minister for Lands—the present Agent-General—were present, he would recall that both he and the Director of Agriculture were inclined to

Majority against—5.

Question thus negatived.

throw cold water on my suggestion that eventually all land, from Albany right across to Esperance, would be developed.

However, I think that the time is not far distant when we will see that development taking place right across the south coast. I can visualise the problems that will arise when that development is made, and also the vast amount of capital that will have to be expended to bring it about. There are always those people, of course, who are prepared to invest their capital in this type of development without fully acquainting themselves with some of the problems involved; and, naturally enough, some of them have got themselves into trouble.

I think the Chase Syndicate was over-optimistic in regard to what it could do with the money that was made available to it at that time. In any case, the result has been disappointing, because the development that we hoped would take place before this has not eventuated. This has meant that development and progress in the district have been retarded in many other directions. For example, I hoped that, if the development on the Esperance plain went ahead rapidly it would justify the extension and expedite the provision of Government facilities.

I represent the district immediately adjacent to the Esperance plain area; and if there had been rapid development made there, I was hoping to see the road bituminised to Lake King, to Ravensthorpe, or even beyond that point instead of only beyond Lake Grace and Newdegate as at present. A good road system in that district is very important.

I realise, however, that the Government of the day cannot make advances faster than is justified by the use that is made of them. The delay in the development of the Esperance plains has resulted in many facilities not being provided as had been hoped.

One of the greatest drawbacks in that district—which I think the Premier mentioned previously—is its isolation and related problems. However, as the population of those districts increases, their isolation must progressively decrease. As the number of residents increases, the social life in those areas will be improved, and it will be found that many people who are not anxious to reside there at present—purely because the population is so sparse—will find it an attractive place in which to live, because the climate in that area is the best of any in Australia.

I am sure that that factor alone would induce many people to settle there, all other things being equal. I emphasise that it is extremely desirable, from many points of view, that the development of the Esperance plain should be as rapid as possible. I have a particular interest in that district because a large slice of the land reserved for the Chase Syndicate—which comes within the agreement made

between the syndicate and the Government—is within the boundaries of the Roe electorate and is adjacent to Ravensthorpe.

When the agreement was being considered, I asked how long it would be before the western portion of the area reserved to the Chase Syndicate would be developed. I think it was either the Premier or the Minister for Lands who induced me to have a discussion with Mr. Chase concerning that point at the time. I can recall explaining to Mr. Chase how undesirable it was, from my point of view as the representative of the people in the Ravensthorpe district in particular, that such a large area of land adjacent to that district should be tied up until the vast easterly portion of the reserve held by the syndicate was developed.

I can recall that Mr. Chase told me at that time—I think the Leader of the Opposition was also present—that as soon as the syndicate commenced its operations in the eastern portion of the Esperance plain arrangements would be made for another camp to be established in the western portion so that the eastern and western sections of the area could be developed simultaneously.

That statement more or less met my objections to the slow development of the area adjacent to Ravensthorpe which means that the greater demand which would have been made on Ravensthorpe as a centre resulting in the creation of a large town and all the things associated with it has not eventuated.

Of course, the failure of the plan to run to schedule has resulted in only a small amount of development being made by the Chase Syndicate, even on the eastern portion of its reserve. It now appears that it will be several years before any development is made in the western portion.

As hon. members will appreciate, I view this matter somewhat seriously. I have before me the agreement between the State Government and the Chase Syndicate, and also a map delineating areas reserved for the syndicate. If hon. members look at that particular map, they will notice that the eastern and western portions of the total of 1,500,000 acres are roughly equal. That means that about 750,000 acres of the total area of the western portion extend from about the Lort River right back to the Jerdacuttup River which is comparatively close to Hopetoun.

Mr. O'Brien: Is that land considered first-grade land?

Mr. PERKINS: I would say that some of the land from the Oldfield River back to the Jerdacuttup River is the best on the Esperance plain. It has a reliable rainfall, and the old residents tell me they consider it is the pick of the Esperance plain. There is no doubt as to the quality of the land. The Young River is a little

further east than the Oldfield River; and as hon. members know, Mr. Noel White has done an excellent job in developing a property there. There is possibly more to see on Mr. White's property than on any other developed property in that area.

Immediately west of Mr. White's property, at the Young River, is the other property taken over by Mr. Kelman from Queensland; and although I have not been there in recent times, I understand that very considerable development has taken place along the soundest lines possible. I have every reason to believe that if further land were available in large portions in that particular area, other people, with big resources and considerable experience of land development in Australia, would be prepared to carry out similar development in that district.

The point I am trying to make is that in the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition, the important word is "renegotiate." I did not get it quite clearly from the Leader of the Opposition, as to whether he wanted to start all over again on the agreement. I hardly think that is necessary. In fairness to the American investors, I think we should give them an opportunity to see what they can do with a reasonable portion of land in that district.

Mr. Brand: I heartily agree.

Mr. PERKINS: But obviously, at the present rate of development, and even with the plans they announced, it is going to be a long time before they can develop 1,500,000 acres. I would emphasise to the Government the magnitude of developing 1,500,000 acres at costs which have been proved to be likely to be incurred in that area. It would be a vast project indeed, and personally I do not think it is necessary for the Chase Syndicate to have such a large area as 1,500,000 acres reserved for it.

In any negotiations that take place between the Government and the Chase Syndicate, I think that some discussions could be directed along the lines of getting the syndicate to release a considerable portion of what I would call the western area—perhaps the area from the Young River, or from where Mr. Kelman is developing his property, right back to the western boundary at the Jerdacuttup River. This might be a suitable portion, if it were to revert to the State, for allocation to others interested in developing land in that particular area.

If that area is too much, then perhaps it could be reduced, and an area from the Oldfield River back to the Jerdacuttup River might be sufficient. Looking at the map, we find there would be roughly 100,000 acres between the Oldfield River and the Jerdacuttup River. But that is only a guess. Obviously it would be necessary to have a considerable area

available to show the other investors who might be interested in developing land in that district. At the present time the State has provided facilities of various kinds to serve the area I have mentioned.

There is, of course, a good road going from Ravensthorpe across to Esperance, and the area between the Oldfield River and the Jerdacuttup is immediately south of that road. The road is in quite reasonable condition at the present time. Concentrates from the coppermines and goldmines at Ravensthorpe are, at present, being carted to Esperance for shipment from that port. There is a considerable tonnage of ore involved and, generally speaking, the road is maintained in reasonable order, although I would hope that in the not-too-distant future it will be considerably improved. The desire is that before too many years have elapsed the entire road will be sealed. This is necessary to provide first-class communications in that district.

I would also point out that if inquiries are made at the Lands Department it will be found that practically all the country between the Jerdacuttup River right back to the East Barron Ranges rising on the eastern side of Hopetoun has been taken up. There is considerable development in the Hopetoun area. There are a number of men, who have done a considerable amount of development. There is a good road extending from Ravensthorpe down to Hopetoun. So the area I mentioned between the Jerdacuttup River and the Oldfield River is actually served by roads on two sides; and it seems desirable that where the Government has incurred expense in providing these facilities the maximum use should be made of the surrounding land.

As the position stands at present—unless a spokesman of the Government can tell us otherwise—it appears that if this land is left to the Chase Syndicate, it will be a considerable time indeed before any development can take place on it. If there are prospects of the Chase Syndicate starting development in the very near future on this western portion of the area reserved for it, then I would like to know about it; and this is the opportunity for the Government to make some announcement in connection with it.

If, however—as I suspect—there is no prospect of the Chase Syndicate developing this land for a number of years then, rather than let it lie idle, the opportunity should be taken to have it revert to the Government with the intention of interesting some other people with sufficient capital to develop the property and perhaps carry on in that area, and do a similar job to that done by Messrs. Noel White and Kelman a little further eastward; and that done by other capable farmers further eastward again.

Mr. Potter: The Chase Syndicate should be given a go for the time being.

Mr. PERKINS: That syndicate is not going on with the development as was expected. If the hon. member will examine the position he will find that 1,500,000 acres are involved. The syndicate is doing a little in the far eastern portion, but there are 750,000 acres to the west on which no work is being done. Surely the hon. member is not suggesting that we should hold such a large area of land for 10 to 15 years, without any development being carried out!

I would not like to suggest any course of action which will make it more difficult for the Chase Syndicate to carry on. I realise it has had its full share of difficulties, but those difficulties were not altogether unexpected. A great many people over-simplified the development of this area. If the American investors persist in development, I have no doubt they will eventually have a very valuable holding.

One should consider the cost of development. Contrary to what has been suggested—that the land could be developed for £6 to £7 an acre—any experienced agriculturist would realise that the cost would be between £18 to £20; and, of course, that figure for development is very low in respect of country which will carry two sheep per acre, or even better.

Mr. Potter: The Minister named the figure.

Mr. PERKINS: Whatever figure was quoted, the actual cost was more. If we take the figure as £18 per acre for development, with 1,500,000 acres, by simple calculation the cost of development will be £27,000,000. If any body of investors has that sum to expend on development within 10 years, it is their good fortune, and they would be a great asset to this State. It is not realistic to expect that such a large sum of money will be readily available.

I want to emphasise that there is no sense in tying up an unduly large portion of the State when there are other investors ready to undertake development. I realise that it is better for the Chase Syndicate if further development by other investors in that area is undertaken. I contend that people like White, Kelman, Button, Russell, and others down there are the ones putting Esperance on the map. They are the ones who are carrying on the development successfully and they will have something to show for it.

If other investors in Australia are given the opportunity to obtain suitable land around Esperance they will make the district more secure and the Chase Syndicate will benefit from any development. Obviously, the more development that goes on, the more experiments will be carried out and the quicker will the development of the country proceed.

I want to emphasise that a very great interest is taken in land in that part of the State. I know of my own knowledge

that there is no large area of land available in the Hopetoun district, as all the suitable land within reasonable distances of established services has been taken up.

Mr. Potter: Is that interest being maintained in recent times?

Mr. PERKINS: I think so. The settlers are still going ahead with development—subject, of course, to one reservation: that is, that suitable transport facilities are maintained in that area. I have already spoken on that aspect tonight, and I do not intend to cover the ground again. Obviously, in any isolated area, such as this, the cost of transport is very important.

Development in those districts is subject to transport costs being kept within reasonable proportions. As that part of the State is developed, production from it grows. A good deal depends on the interest being maintained in that district, and what happens to the price of wool and meat. That part of the State is more meat country than wool-producing country, but one goes with the other. However, quite good quality wool is grown down there, in addition to which the country is suitable for the growing of crops.

Whatever commodity is produced has to be marketed, and it is very important that the transport costs be kept at a reasonable level; otherwise the future of the district can be seriously impaired. I do not want to go into any further detail on this matter. Once this subject has been ventilated no good will come of pressing the motion to a vote, and in that regard I agree with the Premier.

The development in this portion of the State has to be handled by the Government of the day rather carefully. As I said, there is no sense in letting the Government of the day think we are entirely satisfied, when in fact we are not. I reiterate again this important point: If there is other capital available for the development of a portion of the area in question, the Government might have, a discussion with the Chase Syndicate to see if any portion, particularly the western portion of the land held by the syndicate, could be released, so that other parties who have sufficient experience and capital can develop it.

I do not want to increase the difficulties of the Chase Syndicate in any way. I say again that after its initial troubles it will succeed eventually. There is plenty of room along the south coast to absorb all the American capital, as well as all the other capital in Australia for development. If we can handle this matter to interest people with capital for the purpose of developing that large portion of the State, then we will be nearer the day when a much greater production will be forthcoming from that area; and there will be a greater justification for the provision of all

the Government services which are necessary to make social life more attractive, and to bring that area into its own.

On motion by Mr. Norton, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE HON. A. R. G. HAWKE (Premier—Northam): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 3 p.m. tomorrow.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 9.51 p.m.

Legislative Council

Thursday, the 30th October, 1958.

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The **PRESIDENT** took the Chair at 3.30 p.m., and read prayers.

ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT BILL (No. 4).

Third Reading.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Assembly.

TOTALISATOR DUTY ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Report of Committee adopted.

TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Reports of Committee adopted.

CANCER COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA BILL.

Second Reading.

THE HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (Minister for Railways—North) [3.36] in moving the second reading said: The object

of this Bill is to create a statutory body corporate to take the place of the Ministerially appointed Anti-Cancer Council of Western Australia. The history of the Anti-Cancer Council commenced in January, 1955, when the State Government accepted an invitation from the Commonwealth to attend a cancer conference in Canberra. The purpose of this conference was to discuss, on an Australia-wide basis, certain aspects of anti-cancer control. On the invitation of the State Minister for Health, Drs. Alan Nelson and Leslie Le Souef represented Western Australia at the conference.

After their return they advised the Minister that Western Australia was the only State without an anti-cancer council. They recommended the appointment of such a council which, they said, could act for Western Australia in any future interstate deliberations. They suggested also, that the time might not be opportune for the formation of a statutory body, and that one appointed by the Minister could act for the time being. The two doctors' recommendations were accepted and formation of the Anti-Cancer Council of Western Australia was approved by the Minister for Health on the 7th October, 1955.

The first members of the council were Drs. L. Le Souef (Chairman) and A. J. Nelson (both representing the Royal Perth Hospital); Dr. M. E. Minchin (Fremantle Hospital); Dr. H. C. Callagher (King Edward Memorial Hospital); the Hon. J. G. Hislop (British Medical Association); Dr. L. Henzell (Commissioner of Public Health); Dr. W. S. Davidson (Deputy Commissioner of Public Health); and Mr. B. Dunlop (Commonwealth X-ray Laboratories). Dr. Davidson has acted as secretary of the council.

The responsibilities of the council were to advise the Government in the development and direction of anti-cancer activities within the State; to undertake from time to time any tasks allotted or approved by the Minister; and to collect information from or enter into arrangements with individuals and institutions with the objective of improving anti-cancer measures in the State.

The council at its first meeting on the 24th April, 1956, recommended that it be registered as a charitable organisation, under the Charitable Collections Act, in order to raise moneys by public subscription and utilise those moneys. At its second meeting on the 5th June, 1956, the council resolved to advise the Minister that a cobalt bomb should be obtained to assist in the treatment of cancer in the State, and that adequate information regarding cancer could not be obtained without some form of cancer registry being introduced to collect data about cancer cases in the State.