

I therefore declare the Session open, and trust that Divine Providence will bless your labours.

(The Lieutenant-Governor then retired and the Deputy President resumed the Chair.)

BILL—WORKERS' HOMES ACT AMENDMENT.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon J. M. Drew—Central) [3.9]: In order to assert and maintain the undoubted rights and privileges of this House to initiate legislation, I move without notice for leave to introduce a Bill entitled An Act to amend Section 44 (b) of the Workers' Homes Act, 1911-28.

Leave given: Bill introduced and read a first time.

LIEUT.-GOVERNOR'S SPEECH, DISTRIBUTION.

THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT: For the sake of greater accuracy, I have obtained from His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor, copies of the Speech he has been pleased to deliver to Parliament. These will be distributed amongst members.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY, ADOPTED.

HON. E. H. GRAY (West) [3.12]: I move—

That the following Address be presented to His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor in reply to the Speech he has been pleased to deliver to us:—May it please Your Excellency: We, the members of the Legislative Council of the State of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign and to thank Your Excellency for the Speech you have been pleased to deliver to Parliament.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [3.13]: I second the motion.

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

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [3.14]: I move—

That the Address-in-reply be presented to His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor by the Deputy President and such members as may desire to accompany him.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 3.15 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 21st March, 1929.

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MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLY.

The Legislative Assembly met at 3 p.m. pursuant to proclamation by His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor, which proclamation was read by the clerk.

The **SPEAKER** took the Chair.

SUMMONS FROM THE LIEUT.- GOVERNOR.

The Speaker and hon. members, in response to summons, proceeded to the Legislative Council Chamber and, having heard His Excellency deliver the opening speech (vide Council report ante), they returned to the Assembly Chamber.

LIEUT.-GOVERNOR'S OPENING SPEECH.

Mr. SPEAKER: In company with hon. members of this Chamber, I attended His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor and Administrator in the Legislative Council Chamber to hear the Speech His Excellency was pleased to deliver to both Houses of Parliament. For greater accuracy and convenience I have had printed copies of the Speech distributed amongst members of this Chamber.

LAPSED BILLS.

Standing Orders Suspension.

THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH (Hon. S. W. Munsie—Hannan-) [3.11]: I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable a resolution to be passed requesting the Legislative Council to restore to its Notice Paper under the Standing Orders relating to lapsed Bills the Hospital Fund Bill and the Hospital Fund (Contributions) Bill before the Address-in-reply is adopted.

Question put and declared passed by an absolute majority.

Message to Legislative Council.

THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH (Hon. S. W. Munsie—Hannans) [3.12]: I now move—

That in accordance with the Legislative Assembly's Standing Order 419 the Legislative Assembly requests the Legislative Council to resume the consideration of a Bill for an Act to establish a hospital fund and for the administration thereof, and also a Bill for an Act to impose and fix the rate of contributions to the hospital fund, in the stages which they had reached last session.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [3.13]: I should like another opportunity to consider the Bill in this Chamber.

The Premier: I think it will come back to us amended.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Premier promises that the Bill will come back to us. I am sure it will, and we shall then have an opportunity to consider the amendments. The financial position has altered somewhat since the Bill was originally introduced into this House. I think it is now fairly well understood by members that such a Bill must increase the burden imposed upon the people, but it might now be possible to meet requirements out of the money that is no longer needed for payment to the trustees of the sinking fund in London. Much is bound up in the taxation being imposed upon the people by the State Parliament, by local authorities and the Federal Parliament. It is impossible to take very much money from the pockets of the people without interfering with trade. I am well aware that the Hospital Fund Bill was passed by this House, and it is now desired that its consideration be resumed by another place. I hope the Premier's anticipation that we shall have an opportunity to consider some of the amendments will prove correct. The Government did accept some amendments in this Chamber, one by the member for West Perth.

Mr. Davy: They accepted one and knocked it out afterwards.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It is not merely a question of helping the hospitals; it is a question of raising money for the purpose of carrying on hospitals. I do not intend to oppose the motion, but I hope we

shall have an opportunity to consider or reconsider some of the provisions found in the measure.

HON. G. TAYLOR (Mount Margaret) [3.15]: I do not intend to oppose the motion, but in view of the attitude of members of another Chamber who were responsible for the Bill being placed where it was last session, it would have been wiser had the Government introduced a new Bill on different lines to provide for taxation for hospital purposes. The Government had a great opportunity to gather from the views expressed and the action of another place that members there would not have the Bill that was sent to them last session. The resolution in Committee to report progress was moved with the object of shelving the Bill. It was not moved that the Chairman of Committees should leave the Chair in order to kill the Bill; members of the Council adopted another method that had precisely the same effect. My leader has stated that we shall undoubtedly have an opportunity to discuss some of the details. All that we shall be able to discuss will be the amendments sent back from another place, and the discussion on those amendments will be limited. It will be confined to those amendments and we shall not be able to advance any new ideas or fresh principles. Members on this side, and on the other side as well, will not be able to deal with the best method of raising funds for the upkeep of hospitals and for the treatment of those people who need the benefits of a measure of this kind. I regret that the Government have not brought down a new Bill. It is idle for them to contend that this is merely a special session. We are here as members of Parliament to transact the business of the country, and whether we do it in March or December matters not to me. The Government had ample time to bring down, this month or next month, a Bill dealing with hospitals and the necessary taxation, and they would then have been free to prepare for the usual session commencing in July. I am sorry that we are going to have such a limited opportunity to deal with such an important question.

MR. THOMSON (Katanning) [3.19]: I concur in the remarks made by the preceding speakers. If another place does pass the measure with amendments, we shall be

able to deal with only those amendments. I agree with the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition that since the Bill was before the House events have led some members to modify their views, so that any proposal to impose an additional burden on the people does seem to require very grave consideration. I wish a new Bill had been submitted to the House for consideration. It would have been a good thing to inaugurate the system that is in existence in Queensland, where, without any increased burden or direct taxation upon the people, the Government are able to finance all their hospitals and charitable institutions, and where also the Treasury has benefited very considerably from the legislation. I should like to have had that system considered here. I strongly object to the imposition of additional taxation upon the community, and, in view of the present position, I would rather the Minister had brought down another measure that might have been more acceptable to the House, and might have avoided placing any additional burden upon the people.

The Minister for Health: I have 90 per cent. of the population of the State behind me in this.

Question put and passed.

BILL—REDISTRIBUTION OF SEATS.

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [3.26]: In order to assert and maintain the undoubted rights and privileges of this House to initiate legislation, I move, without notice, for leave to introduce a Bill for the Redistribution of Seats at Parliamentary Elections.

Leave given: Bill introduced and read a first time.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY, ADOPTED.

MR. WANSBROUGH (Albany) [3.27]: I move—

That the following Address be presented to His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor in reply to the Speech he has been pleased to deliver to us:—"May it please Your Excellency. We, the members of the Legislative Assembly of the State of Western Australia, in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign, and to thank Your Excellency for the Speech you have been pleased to deliver to Parliament."

MR. CHESSON (Cue) [3.28]: As this is a special session to debate practically one Bill only, that dealing with the redistribution of seats, I will content myself with formally seconding the motion.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [3.39]: Apart from the fact that this session has been called particularly to deal with one Bill, there may be special reasons why there should be a little discussion on other matters. I should like to know from the Minister, who has been in touch with settlers who are in trouble, whether he intends to afford them the necessary assistance in deserving cases, through the medium of the Agricultural Bank. The assistance that is given will have to be given soon. The Minister for Railways said, when speaking at a smoke social last night, that the Government would provide assistance in no niggardly way.

The Minister for Railways: In deserving cases. I did not say that at a smoke social, but at a luncheon.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am glad at any rate that he did say the Government would give assistance in deserving cases. All I want to know from the Government is that this assistance will be given without delay. It is not a question, under our system of land settlement, of helping merely the settler. The lands have to be developed, and it must be done by the aid of the Government. It has been our way for the last 23 years to expend more to assist in the development of the land than probably any other State in the world. We waited for about 80 years for people to come here and grow enough wheat for the bread of our population. Under the system of State aid to agriculture, in seven years from the time we began development we produced eight times as much wheat as we needed for ourselves; and to-day it is more necessary than ever for us to grow wheat and wool for export in order that we may at least endeavour to pay for the many things that we import so lavishly. It is not necessary for us to assist all the people who are on the land. After all, though we did not get as much wheat as we expected, 34,000,000 bushels is not a bad harvest, and there ought not to be need for any great financial assistance. Indeed, it is fortunate that we are not called upon to help a good many

more of the people on the land. If the whole of the country were in trouble, there would be no doubt about assistance being forthcoming. I hope the Government will satisfy the people that the assistance needed will be forthcoming, and forthcoming soon. At this stage I should like to mention that there is considerable unemployment in Western Australia, and that it seems to be growing. Of course it is almost impossible for the unemployed to find work in the country. They have to be assisted; there is no help for it. Is it not possible for the Government to start some work that will absorb a considerable number of the unemployed? It is not a bit of use sending the unemployed into the country. Some hon. member to-day gave notice of a question to the Premier whether he would not tell the men in Perth not to go to Wiluna. If there are men at Wiluna unemployed, what is the use of sending unemployed men from here to take jobs at Wiluna that can be taken by men on the spot?

Mr. Sleeman: It is no use telling them not to go and at the same time pick them up.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We must do something to absorb the growing number of unemployed. It is not fair to send men into the country begging, as they must do. If they cannot get work in the country districts—and they cannot—they are bound to beg. Such a policy is entirely wrong. I hope that work will be provided and that the men will be told plainly that it is no use wandering about the country districts, since no work is to be had there. Good men have been out of work for some time, and the little money they had is gone. I trust the Government will be able to tell us something about assistance to the farmers and about what is to be done to provide work, if possible, for the unemployed. If farmers can be granted loans from the Agricultural Bank to find work for the unemployed, it is a better course than employment on Government work, which frequently means a dead end.

Mr. Sleeman: Unless there is inducement to give preference to Britishers, your suggestion is no good.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I believe that everybody would prefer Britishers, and there is no reason why they should not be preferred. However, men inexperienced in land clearing are not able to

take contracts themselves. I may point out that 95 per cent. of the land cleared in this State has been cleared by Britishers. That is a fair percentage. It cannot be said that 95 per cent. of the work at Fremantle has always been done by Britishers.

Mr. Sleeman: Why pick Fremantle?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Because the hon. member comes from Fremantle, and is very fond of attacking the farmers on the score of their employing foreigners. However, some foreigners have been employed at Fremantle for years, and they are now Australians. In fact, some of them have been here for 20 years. My reference is to the more recent arrivals among the foreigners. With regard to them, I hold that Britishers should come first. I know the Premier will tell us that the financial position is not satisfactory, and that as regards borrowings the Federal Government or the Loan Council deal with the matter. We know that the Federal Parliament has disposed of the Financial Agreement, and that now we must make the best of it. The best that can happen under it will mean, I am sure, a great deal of inconvenience to our Ministers, and probably a great deal of inconvenience to the people of this country. It is useless now to repine; we must make the best of the Financial Agreement. Unquestionably, however, we must have money in order that Western Australia may progress. Certainly there is a great deal of money available under the migration agreement. Still, we have had a heavier deficit for the first eight months of the financial year than we have had for the corresponding period in any previous financial year, I believe; and our railways are not doing as well as we should like. All these matters have to be considered. Every man out of work ought to have a chance of employment. We were particularly fortunate. Not only had we a wonderful revenue, but there was a great increase in land values in the city, with the result that it has been possible to spend a great deal of money from these various sources. Practically all the local authorities of the State, with the exception of Kalgoorlie, have borrowed freely during the last few years; and if by any chance their borrowings fell off, we should have a much worse position than we have now. Parliament is not likely to meet again for four months, and by that time the winter will be well under way. I do not know the exact amount

of money available under the Federal aid roads grant, but whatever money is available ought to be spent in order that there may be employment. Ministers should, I think, devote their time to this question of unemployment and to using every means in their power to provide work. They will need to do it, too, otherwise we shall have an extremely serious position upon us when the winter months come round. There are many other matters I would like to discuss, but I realise that we are here mainly to consider the question of redistribution of seats, and also the Bill fathered by the Minister for Health. We shall deal with the latter when we get the Council's amendments, which, I suppose, we shall receive in due course. I do not propose to anticipate what those amendments will be, and I do not pretend to know. I wish to draw attention mainly to the two major matters I have dealt with—unemployment and the position of the farmers. If the Minister for Lands were here, I would take the opportunity to discuss group settlement matters, which are drifting day by day into greater chaos than before. They will require strong handling in order to rectify the existing position. I understand that the Minister will be back in a few days and I hope he will be fully recovered in health so that he will be able to take control of his department. The Group Settlement Board has no statutory power and the Minister is entirely responsible for all that happens. I can assure the House that there are many happenings that will require investigation and many troubles that, I think, can be rectified easily if only the real position is faced. We are still spending a great deal of money in connection with the group settlements, and I think we shall have to cry a halt very soon. In fact, I think the administration of the group settlements requires overhauling from stem to stern, and I hope it will be overhauled by some Minister of the Crown very soon. I do not know who has been in control of these matters during the absence of the Minister for Lands but the Group Settlement Board requires controlling. Every day I receive letters from settlers in various groups complaining about the treatment meted out to them. That treatment, in my opinion, has been unnecessarily harsh and calculated only to disturb the even working of the scheme. Hon members will realise that the value of the

South-West has been well established. There is a demand for land there. Men from the Eastern States are taking it up and there is no longer any question about the value of the South-West. No one can deny that that is the position to-day and that feeling applies to such a large area of the country as to justify us in saying that the doubts held by some people a year ago should be completely dispelled. Those people should admit it and see to it that we get on with our duty in the development of that area. I notice that the Minister for Agriculture has been devoting some attention to this matter, and speaking soft words to the people. The settlers are entitled to more than soft words and I hope they will get what they deserve. What some hon. members should do is to apologise to the people for the criticism they have levelled in the past at the South-West, for the doubts they have cast upon that part of the State, and they should do it at once. Now that they realise they made a mistake, they should say so. For goodness sake, do not refrain from doing so until just before the general elections. If those hon. members I refer to were to adopt that attitude and leave it till election time to make their admission regarding the value of that part of the State, the fact will remain that that was not their attitude a year ago. I do not know how the 3,500-farms scheme is progressing. A lot of people wish to get hold of blocks. I presume some have been surveyed and can be thrown open for selection. Let us get on with the development of the South-West and also of the wheat belt. If that is done, it will absorb a great many people who have been unable to secure work for some time. I have nothing more to say. I hope we shall not require to sit very long for the consideration of the Redistribution of Seats Bill.

Hon. G. Taylor: Do you want to throw it out straight away?

Mr. Panton: Some of us would be with you.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I have not seen the Bill nor have I yet seen the whole of the maps. I know that the legislation we passed last session contained our instructions to the Commissioners as to the allocation of the boundaries of electorates, and I presume the boundaries have been marked in accordance with the provisions of that Act. If that is so, unquestionably we must pass the Bill.

Hon. G. Taylor: We did not do that last time.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No, but, by God, surely on this second occasion members will give some measure of justice to the people of this State! I have said that, in my opinion, the Act we passed last session, which led to the Bill we are to discuss shortly, was not nearly so favourable to the country districts as was the legislation I introduced.

Mr. Latham: The more you see of it, the worse it seems to be.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Members of this Chamber passed the Electoral Districts Act Amendment Act last session without much protest. I pointed out that it was not an improvement on the Act already on the statute-book, but I accepted it because I did not expect to get so much from the present Government.

The Minister for Health: You were surprised at it!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I shall be more surprised if the Bill now to come before us is not passed. At any rate, I have no wish to discuss that matter now because the Bill will be before us next week. My surprise was that last session the Premier's legislation, which led to the Bill we shall discuss, was passed without much discussion and, I believe, without a division of this House.

Hon. G. Taylor: Members thought it was a joke, but now they realise it was not.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not think the electors will consider it a joke at all.

Hon. G. Taylor: The electors of Mt. Margaret will not.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: However, we shall consider that matter next week and I do not suppose we shall be very long in dealing with it. Those who oppose the Bill will have to shoulder a very serious responsibility, unless there is something radically wrong with the electoral boundaries.

MR. THOMSON (Katanning) [3.47]: The hon. member who has just resumed his seat has dealt with the position of the unemployed. We are all deeply sympathetic with those unfortunate people who are looking for work and cannot get it. In my opinion, the Government, with the funds available, have made an honest attempt to relieve the situation. The section of the community the Country Party members

represent promise that work will be found if possible in the agricultural districts. We consider that co-ordination is required in connection with efforts made along those lines. I do not know of anything more pitiful than the spectacle of a man, with a wife and family dependent upon him, looking for work and unable to find it. As to the position of the agricultural industry, a deputation waited upon the Deputy Premier recently, and we were very pleased with the sympathetic way in which we were received. I hope we shall receive a definite statement from the Minister to-morrow as to what steps have been taken to assist the farming community. There are some people who have said that a certain amount of pessimism has been indicated in the references to the position of the farming community, and that it has not been much of an advertisement for the State, because of the attitude adopted by those who have spoken on the subject. If genuine criticism had been forthcoming and acted upon, no doubt very many settlers who to-day are off the land—I refer more particularly to the South-West and the group settlements—many of them by the system compelled to give up, probably would have been successful farmers to-day. Therefore we offer no apology at all for having entered into the discussion. I feel sure that as a result of the action we took, much good will accrue to the farming community. I am one of those who always prefer action to remaining silent. Dealing with the 3,500 farms scheme, there seems to be an impression that not very much progress has been made. I hope the Premier will take the opportunity to advise the House as to what is being done about that excellent scheme. If we could enter into more active work in the preparation of those farms—I do not mean that we should work on the lines adopted in respect of group settlement—if we were able to offer facilities for people to go out and take up this land, it would materially help to solve the unemployment problem. Might I suggest to the Premier and to the Government that they give serious consideration to the proposal I placed before the people of Western Australia regarding the uniform railway gauge. I maintain it is an economic waste if we are to pull up the present Kalgoorlie-Fremantle section and construct a broad gauge railway in its place, spending anything up to a million and a half of money which will not create any new wealth in this State. It does seem to me that, regarded as part of the 3,500

farms scheme, it would be of great advantage if we could induce the Federal Government to consider the advisability of bringing that railway, say, from Kalgoorlie down along the Norseman line and then across, linking up with Corrigin, and so on to Armadale and Fremantle. It would answer a two-fold purpose.

Mr. North: It would also avoid the break of gauge with the State railway.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes, but in the interests of local traffic it would be necessary to put the third rail there so as to enable our products to reach their natural ports. I would like the Government, if they consider it of sufficient importance, as I do, to submit it to the Federal Government with a request that the Migration and Development Commission should give the matter consideration. In view of the state of the finances, not only of Western Australia, but also of the Commonwealth, if by providing a uniform gauge, which is considered to be in the interests of the Commonwealth from a defence point of view as well as conveniencing the passengers travelling east and west, I think the Commonwealth could and should bear the greater portion of the financial burden. I would like to see the line come across there, and also link up with the port of Albany. The reason why I suggest that, is that Albany is a key position from the defence point of view. I appeal to the Premier to give that matter serious consideration. As I suggested earlier, it might also be the means of helping to employ quite a large number of people at present out of work. Coming to group settlement and the Peel Estate in particular, I may remind the House that we have spent on that estate a very large sum of money, approximately 2½ million pounds, despite which I am informed that on that estate at present we have only about 150 settlers. At this stage I am not going to criticise the action of the board in reducing the number of settlers to 150. That is a matter upon which, presumably, they acted in accordance with what they thought to be best. At present there is afoot an official proposal to collect the sewage effluent of the metropolitan area and pump it to an ocean outfall. A newspaper correspondent has suggested that as an alternative the Peel Estate might be used as a sewage farm. I do not know whether that scheme is practicable or even

possible, since I have not the levels, and am not aware of the distances. But in view of the fact that so large an amount of money has been spent on the Peel Estate, it seems to me the Government would be well advised to examine that project and see whether it would not help us to redeem the large amount of public money expended there. To-day it is very depressing to see the number of empty houses on those sand hills at the Peel Estate, and I feel sure that if the scheme were found to be practicable the sewage effluent from the metropolitan area would bring a great deal of that land under remunerative production. I commend that to the consideration of the Government and suggest that at a later date they let the House know whether or not the scheme is within the realm of practicability. At this stage I do not intend to touch upon the redistribution of seats, for that is a matter we shall be discussing later. I want to assure the Government once more that if there is anything this party can do to assist them in respect of the unemployed, the Government have only to ask and we shall do anything we possibly can to help find work for men honestly desirous of getting it.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford) [3.59]: I have no desire to prolong the debate, but I want to support those members who have mentioned the difficulties being experienced in our agricultural areas. I congratulate the Government on their efforts to overcome the main difficulty, namely, the supplying of superphosphate to those farmers whose crops were not sufficient to enable them to meet the financial obligations attached to the provision of manure for this year. The position now is that those farmers receiving assistance under the Government arrangement with the distributors are really placed on a cash basis; and a cash basis for super purchases is quite a consideration. For instance, the man whose financial position was sufficiently sound to enable him to make arrangements with the firms for his supply of super is in a very different position from the man who comes under the Government scheme, although the financial position of the latter from the point of view of stability is not to be compared with that of the former. Those farmers who were able to carry on by arranging their financial affairs so

that the firms could give them further consideration are paying for their super on terms, and the terms for super are very exacting.

Mr. Thomson: Very heavy.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: It has been said that the rate represents about 18 per cent.

Mr. Lindsay: That is only recently. At one time the firms charged 1s. per ton per month.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I do not want to argue that point. I will satisfy myself by saying that the credit conditions are very exacting and most expensive. On the other hand, a man who comes under the Government scheme, although not in as sound a financial position, is able to get the benefit of the discount of 8s. 6d. per ton. Consequently the Government have placed such men in a rather better position than the others occupy. Of course, such difficulties have always attended agricultural assistance. We know that in 1914 many farmers received consideration when they did not deserve it, while to others that did deserve it, it was refused. That, however, cannot be avoided. It is worth while recording in the Government's favour that when they did tackle this question, they did so on a sound basis by placing the indigent farmer for the time being—if we may call him such—on a cash basis and enabling him to get a better result from his labour consequent upon receiving cheap super than would otherwise have been the case.

Mr. Latham: The Agricultural Bank policy has been to supply on those terms.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: No, the policy of the Agricultural Bank has never been to supply superphosphate. It has supplied super. in certain special cases. The hon. member knows perfectly well he has had many refusals in regard to applications.

Mr. Latham: And very recently, too.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: That is so. Therefore it is of no use saying it is the policy of the Agricultural Bank to supply super.

Mr. Latham: I said to supply on those terms.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The Agricultural Bank did not buy until the Government took the matter in hand and issued the instructions to which I have referred. We have to appreciate

that this year great difficulties are being experienced throughout our agricultural districts. The water problem has been most acute. Never in the history of my farming experience has it been so bad, and farmers have been put to great expense to cart water, although many of them had invested a considerable amount of money in water supplies in the shape of dams, soaks, wells, etc. From that point of view farmers are experiencing difficulty because their cost of farming has been increased by the expenditure entailed for carting water. I do not desire to say much on this question because there is no need to do so. The Government, in my opinion, have already arranged matters on a satisfactory basis. What I wish to appeal to the Government to appreciate is that, in the Agricultural Bank, we have an administration saddled with the most difficult problems that any department of the State has to grapple with. I challenge contradiction when I say that no department carries the amount of anxiety borne by the responsible officers of the Agricultural Bank. We have to appreciate that this year those anxieties have been increased considerably. Again, the Government have decided to proceed with and a good deal of settlement has taken place in connection with the 3,500 farms scheme. I have already stated in this House—it is on record—and I repeat it, that in that scheme we have undertaken the biggest gamble we have ever embarked on in the field of agricultural development. Let me repeat what I have said previously that I have no objection to the attempt being made: I believe the attempt is necessary. All that I object to is that we are making the attempt on too great a scale. In our agricultural development in this country we have always failed because we have never been content to go slowly and feel our way. The member for Northam failed in the early history of agricultural settlement by throwing areas open without railway communication, and we all know the great privations that attended that early settlement. Again, in group settlement, we know the main difficulty was that we had an organisation capable of studying the question, making a careful selection of land and putting in one group per quarter, but instead of being content with one group per quarter, it was decided that we must have one group per week.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What of that?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Immediately that policy was declared, the whole thing crumbled.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Rot!

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The poor land that was selected was selected during the rush period. When the Royal Commission asked the officers why they had selected such rubbishy land—land that is now being abandoned—they said they did not have time to devote to a careful selection of suitable areas that were available in the South-West. In connection with the 3,500 farms scheme I say greater care should be exercised.

Mr. Sampson: I thought you had dropped that mark-time policy.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I am not favouring a mark-time attitude, but I do want the Government to adopt a sound attitude. We cannot go on indefinitely losing money on the groups as we have lost it. It is hard to ascertain just how much we have lost.

Mr. Sampson: There have been losses in the development of the wheat belt.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: That is so, losses all round, and there must be losses in any case, but we have been magnifying our losses through trying to do things on a scale bigger than our organisation would permit.

Mr. Sampson interjected.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Whether the member for Swan agrees with me or not, I do not think he knows anything about the subject. Those farmers located 50 or 60 miles from a railway will be heart-broken before railway facilities can be taken within reasonable distance of them. It would be far better to wait until we were ready to give them facilities for development, cultivation and production, rather than put people out there so far away and in such hopeless conditions. I wish to see that country developed, but I appeal to members to realise that we are going to experience great difficulty in that country and the difficulty is going to be increased by reason of the fact that we are proceeding a bit too fast. All these difficulties will be placed upon the shoulders of the administrators of the Agricultural Bank. Whilst we appreciate the fact that the responsibilities upon that administration have increased, we must agree that the increase in land settlement in recent years in the more remote parts of the wheat

areas, such as the Esperance district, have tended largely to bring about that increased responsibility. Having admitted that, I want to enter an emphatic protest against the weakening of an already overloaded administration. In this respect I refer to the overloading of work. I have no hesitation in declaring that this organisation requires to be strengthened; it does not want to be weakened. It will not stand any weakening. We have some wonderfully good men who are administering the affairs of the bank, but they are limited in number. We now find that two of the most capable officers, Mr. Hewby and Mr. Grogan, have been taken away from two of the most difficult administrative positions, and put on to special jobs. The bank has made advances of over £6,500,000. It has made a wonderful job of its business, but the officers associated with the institution, who have had experience of it in the early stages and grown up with it, are beginning, just as I am, to feel the weakness of age. These officers are not as vigorous as they were, or as capable of carrying burdens as they were 25 or 30 years ago. The Government should comb the outside inspectorate, and endeavour to find amongst those outside officers capable men who thoroughly understand farming and administrative work. The governors of the Agricultural Bank must have a practical knowledge of farming, and be in a position to talk practical farming with the officers in the institution. There are such officers in the institution, but they are considerably reduced in number by the departure of Mr. Hewby and Mr. Grogan. I appeal to the Government to realise what they are doing. It is unfair to heap on the responsibilities of administration on the one hand, and on the other deliberately to weaken that administration. Group settlement is an anxiety. Let that scheme carry its own burden. It is possible to get others who will do the work now being done by Mr. Hewby and Mr. Grogan. There was no absolute necessity for selecting those two officers for the work. They were not really experienced in the sense that they understood South-West conditions. They had been educated more in the conditions appertaining to the wheat belt where most of the funds of the bank had been distributed. They were particularly serviceable, capable and enthusiastic officers of the bank, and toiled honestly night and day for that institution, but they have been removed from the place where their services were so valuable, to carry out

work that might have been done by others. It is perhaps no use crying over spilt milk, but this has now been done. It is perhaps just as well to cry over spilt milk sometimes in this Assembly. If we do not cry over that we seem to cry over nothing. I have, for a long time, been a member of Parliament, and I never knew an Assembly to talk so much about what has happened, and so little about what may be done to prevent something from happening. These changes have now been made, but I hope the Government will realise that they have weakened the administration of the bank, and will endeavour to bring in the most capable officers from the country districts, men of experience and possessed of the necessary ability for the position of administrators. Such officers could be sent into the head office of the bank so that the administration might be strengthened, and the weaknesses, which have been created by the removal of Mr. Hewby and Mr. Grogan, made good.

MR. LATHAM (York) [4.15]: I would not have spoken but for the remarks of the member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson). The hon. member should know that the trustees of the Agricultural Bank are working under a statute framed by this Chamber. I doubt very much whether they do take orders from their political heads, or their Minister. If they do that they will be doing something which the Act prohibits. I can hardly believe that to be the case. They may make advances according to the policy of the Government. I believe they are fully cognisant of the fact that the settlements for which they make advances are going to have railway communication in the near future. If that is not the case they are making a huge mistake in giving advances upon such settlements. I can hardly believe that pressure has been brought to bear upon the trustees to make advances against doubtful securities. With regard to advances for superphosphate, and the benefits to be derived from the Act generally, we know that advances for the purchase of super are illegal. There is no provision in the Act whereby they may be made. The necessity, however, has arisen for help being given.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There is such provision under the Industries Assistance Act. We do not want the same thing said twice.

MR. LATHAM: That is so. Different circumstances sometimes require skilful handling. If it were necessary I dare say the Minister in charge of the Act would have no difficulty of persuading this House to pass the necessary amendments to it. We are alive to these difficulties. The merchants, as a result of frequent conferences between the representatives of the farmers, the Government and themselves, have been helpful in overcoming the difficulty. In the case of the doubtful securities, the burden will have to be carried, if carried at all, by the Government. We have in this State built up a system of decentralisation for the Agricultural Bank. I regret we have not given the district officers sufficient power in the discharge of their duties. Were they given that power, there would be less congestion at the head office.

MR. CORBOY: The system of decentralisation to-day is practically valueless.

MR. LATHAM: Yes, and it is becoming of less value every year. This is due to the fact that certain officials in the head office exercise too tight a rein over the work of the country officials. So much caution is now being displayed by the latter that work is becoming practically useless. If we want to improve the present conditions, the Minister should request the trustees of the bank to give greater powers to their district officers. I am very concerned about when advances will be made available in necessitous cases. Every time I have investigated any particular case I have found that the difficulties have arisen either through the late supply of seed, the late supply of superphosphate, or the late supply of something else. I trust that any assistance to be rendered to the settlers will be rendered before the end of this month, so that they will know exactly what help they may look for. I have no idea of embarrassing the Government. It is most unfortunate that a considerable section of our agricultural area has had a setback. On the other hand, the northern area has compensated to a great extent for the loss in the mid wheat area. At the same time, we must give these people their requirements at the cheapest possible rates. It is no use for the Agricultural Bank or the Industries Assistance Board or any other body to think that the farming industry can carry additional burdens. It cannot. The merchants of this State have realised that fact, in view of the

rebate of 8s. 6d. per ton on superphosphate to settlers now being assisted. I understand that the merchants are supplying the superphosphate at £4 16s. 6d. and that the rate of interest to be charged is 8 per cent. That is a reasonable arrangement. The old system of £5 5s. per ton for superphosphate and 1s. 6d. per ton per month for deferred payment is scandalous, especially in the case of settlers needing assistance. I do hope that the Government will prevent this kind of imposition. As regards the 3,500 farms scheme, like the member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson) I trust that nothing further will be done until we have determined what railway communication is to be given. I regret to say that there are people to-day, some of them actually employing clearers instead of doing the work themselves quietly, as much as 60 miles from a railway. On the averages of this State, I defy any man to grow wheat profitably at such a distance from railway communication. It is useless to put people out so far, and have them employing labour to clear their holdings, without knowing whether they will get a railway.

Hon. G. Taylor: They will get through.

Mr. LATHAM: Some of them will get through, but some of them will go to the wall.

Hon. G. Taylor: I do not think so.

Mr. LATHAM: If the hon. member will read the legal notices in the newspapers he will learn what is happening. Conditions are utterly unfavourable for men 60 miles from a railway, with only tracks instead of roads, and a long way from water supplies. So far this State has been very fortunate in the development of its lands. The people have not been asked to carry too great a burden in that connection. I hope, however, that in future the same course will be adopted as has been followed in the past. I do not mean that people should be restricted to settling within 12½ miles of a railway. That would be ridiculous. But we can prevent people from going out 50 or 60 miles. I trust that during the next session the Government will be able to define the railway system they propose to construct for the purpose of serving settlers.

MR. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [4.23]: I merely wish to express the hope that the Premier will be able to redeem during this session a promise he made last session.

On two occasions during the last session the Premier promised to place before this House, for its information and also to enable the question to be debated, the latest proposals of the Federal Government as to the taking over of our North. I would remind hon. members that in December, 1926, this Chamber considered certain proposals made by the Federal Government. They were turned down, as they should have been, but it was then indicated to the Premier that possibly some other proposals, in a much modified form, would be submitted by the Federal Government to the State Government, proposals to which we might be able to subscribe or which might lead to some *modus operandi* whereby the two Governments could work together in the development of the North. That, as I have said, was in 1926: and since then we have learnt from the Press that the State Government have received amended proposals from the Federal Government. They are certainly not quite as favourable as I should like to see them, but they are of a very different character from the former proposals. Practically they mean that the Federal Government are prepared to take over the North-West and develop it, holding it merely during the transition stage.

Hon. G. Taylor: The Federal Government are very good at developing. It is their long suit.

Mr. ANGELO: I think it is up to our Government to let this Parliament know exactly what the proposals are, so that we may have an opportunity to discuss them. Last session, in speaking on another motion, I gave certain figures which showed that notwithstanding the great progress being made by Western Australia—the boom is on, as the member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson) would say—the North-West is not by any means participating in that progress. During the last 10 years the North-West has lost 12½ per cent. of its population. In every direction—horses, cattle and sheep—stock has decreased there alarmingly. In fact, the whole of the North-West is in a stagnant condition. I am not blaming the present Government, but I do blame past Governments for not giving the subject more consideration. I ask the Premier to let us discuss the matter this session, if possible, because according to information that has reached me from a very reliable source, information which I do not doubt the Premier himself had placed before him during his

recent visit to the East, big moneyed men at Home, realising the absolute necessity for developing the cattle industry in the British Dominions so that beef may be provided for the Homeland, have made an offer to the Federal Government to spend huge sums of money, running into millions, with the object of developing a big cattle industry in the far north of Australia. Their proposals are to build up the industry not only in Western Australia but also in the Northern Territory. I am assured, however, that those people are averse to having two Administrations to deal with. They want to be able to deal with one Administration, and unless they can get the Western Australian and the Federal Governments to act in unison in granting the concessions required, chiefly in the form of the area needed for the carrying out of this huge work, and also in regard to the time to be allowed for that purpose, they will concentrate their efforts on the Northern Territory and open a port there for the export of their produce. We know what that would mean. It would mean that Wyndham would lose the trade which geographically is her right—the trade of the whole of our North-West and of the Northern Territory. I do ask the Premier, if he has had any discussions with the powers that be over East, to tell the House during this session what the suggestions are, so that he may get an idea of what this Parliament is ready to do. No doubt members will be able to suggest some means whereby the two Governments could work together, so that the northern part of Western Australia, as well as the Northern Territory, may benefit by the influx of this large amount of capital. I appeal to the Premier, not only on behalf of the North-West but on behalf of Australia as a whole, not to let this opportunity go by without taking some steps towards the development of the North which is so necessary for the Australian people.

MR. CORBOY (Yilgarn) [4.28]: I support the remarks of the member for York (Mr. Latham) apropos of the Agricultural Bank and is decentralisation policy. My experience has been that the bank's decentralisation policy has not proved the success that was expected, and this is largely due, as the member for York pointed out, to the district officers not having sufficient power. The position that has been created has resulted in some small benefit to country

residents, but the bank is not so useful or so speedy in its work as it easily might be. To a great extent district offices to-day are merely places for keeping files. If one wants to do business with the bank, one has to wait three or four days while files are obtained from a district office, so that the bank officials may find out what one is talking about. If the district officers had power to deal with these matters, it would be quite all right.

Hon. G. Taylor: The bank is not going to give district officers unlimited powers.

Mr. CORBOY: No, of course not; and no one suggests that. Naturally, the bank trustees themselves must deal with questions of policy with regard to loans and so on, but there are many trivial matters that could be dealt with by the district officers. I will give hon. members an instance that I dealt with yesterday to demonstrate what I mean. A settler had been granted a loan of a definite amount by the bank. He desired to have £100 re-allocated from clearing to dam sinking. He had not made any provision in his original application for a dam and he desired to make provision in the way I have indicated. It did not mean increasing the amount of money provided for him at all. When I went to deal with the matter, I found that the trustees of the Agricultural Bank had to send to the district officer at Narrogin to see whether they could grant the settler's request.

Mr. Latham: The trustees would not know, whereas the man who was on the spot would be in the better position to judge.

Mr. CORBOY: Of course he would! The man who is in the district and knows the farm and what is required there most urgently, is in a better position to deal with such a request, and that man is the district officer of the bank. I think the existing policy is a very foolish one and, as I have already indicated, the district offices are largely places for keeping files. As a result, if one desires to do any business, a delay of some days occurs to enable the trustees to get hold of a settler's file. Even then the trustees have to refer to the district officer. I support the request that has been made by the member for York (Mr. Latham) who urged that greater power should be vested in the district officers. That should be done, or else the system of having district offices scrapped altogether. There are some splendid men among them and they

know their work thoroughly. Let us get them down in Perth to help in the administration of the bank's affairs here!

Hon. G. Taylor: In the instance you refer to, it meant a delay of four or five days.

Mr. CORBOY: Yes, instead of the matter being fixed up in 20 minutes, which should have been the limit of time required for it.

Hon. G. Taylor: Did not the settler know two years ago that he would require a dam?

Mr. CORBOY: He had not been on his block for two years.

Hon. G. Taylor: At any rate, the settler should have known before that he would require a dam. Even so, the delay of four or five days in the construction of a dam would not represent a matter of urgency.

Mr. CORBOY: That would depend upon circumstances. In this instance delay meant a big difference. At the same time I agree that in most cases the delay would not mean anything serious. The instance I mentioned was merely quoted to lend point to my contention. The settlers in my electorate have been hit as hard as any other settlers of this State by the adverse season. I am gratified to know that the Government and the Agricultural Bank trustees have seen fit to insist at last that all these settlers shall adopt proper farming methods. At the same time they have provided the wherewithal to assist the settlers to carry out the necessary fallowing and to enable them to live in the meantime. Thus the Government are giving the people a chance to put their farming operations on a proper basis. I wish to express my gratitude to the Government for the assurance they have given me that every individual case of hardship will be considered on its merits.

Mr. Teesdale: Will you select those cases?

Mr. CORBOY: Of course not. As a matter of fact, neither the Government nor any member of Parliament has any direct dealings under that heading. The Agricultural Bank trustees deal with such matters.

Mr. Latham: That is so.

Mr. CORBOY: However, the Agricultural Bank trustees have shown their desire to assist these settlers. I am glad to say that in the majority of instances, the business firms have been prepared to assist as well. There have been one or two exceptions. I do not wish to mention any names, but I was astonished to find that one firm in particular could be so hard with the

farmers. Probably the firm has been pushed as well.

Mr. Teesdale: Are not the firms easy with them?

Mr. CORBOY: Some of them are. I am sure that if settlers put particulars of their cases before the Agricultural Bank trustees, sympathetic help will be meted out to them. I hope that policy will be continued and that any effort made to assist the settlers to put in a crop this year will be expedited because, unless that assistance is rendered within the next fortnight, it will be too late.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

(Hon. H. Millington-Leederville) [4.35]: I propose to confine my remarks to the question raised by the Leader of the Opposition as to the action taken to deal with difficulties that arose in certain agricultural districts owing to the partial failure of the crops last year, and as to whether sufficient expedition was displayed in taking that action. The reply to the points raised by that hon. member is that, so far from it being a question of the Government not acting early and expeditiously, when people are in trouble, we are not the last to hear about it. I can assure the House that the trustees of the Agricultural Bank were the first to hear about this difficulty. Representations were made to the trustees early in the piece and the trustees, who have the necessary power to render assistance that may be required, grappled with the problem at the outset. Not only have the trustees shaped a policy to govern the operations of the bank, but their policy is such as to enable them to meet exceptional positions that may arise. The trustees have carried out their duties in that respect, and not only have they shaped a policy to meet the position, but they have been in consultation with other firms and banking institutions in the State. Those firms and banks also help in carrying the financial burden. As to the policy of the bank and whether that policy could be altered or made to suit the needs of the hour, I should say that the Agricultural Bank, financed as it is by public money for the purpose of carrying out a public function, must necessarily have a policy to cope with such a position as arose last year. Irrespective of what the authorities here may contend, I say the bank has done that. The trustees have taken on business that involved risks that would never be accepted under other circumstances. Thus the policy of the bank has been widened. It is rather

peculiar to think that the member for York (Mr. Latham) would contend that we should not interfere with the policy of the bank—

Mr. Latham: They are working under statutory powers.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yet immediately afterwards he suggested that we should issue instructions to the trustees to give greater discretionary powers to the district officers.

Mr. Latham: Because you have already established those officers.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Naturally we must accept responsibilities and the Government would be prepared to consult with the trustees of the Agricultural Bank regarding the best way to deal with a position. On the other hand, if we are to go on tinkering with the duties of district officers and so on, in order that they may deal with individual cases as suggested by the member for York, that raises quite another aspect.

Hon. G. Taylor: You would not know where you would be in 12 months time; it would be hopeless.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If all these things are to be referred to the general manager, and Ministers are to be asked to interfere, I do not know what it will lead to.

Mr. Latham: But they are using public moneys for public purposes.

The Premier: And the Act throws the responsibility on the trustees of the Agricultural Bank!

Mr. Latham: Of course it does.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If the hon. member desires to know what action should be taken, I would point out that the best way is through the ordinary channels. Neither the trustees of the Agricultural Bank nor the Government became panicky over the position that arose. There was a tendency to overstate that position. Deputations came to me from districts that were affected, and I assured them that the Agricultural Bank trustees would treat every individual case on its merits, but that it was not intended to broadcast the bank's policy and issue invitations to people to come forward to secure assistance. On the other hand, the ordinary procedure had to be followed. Applications for assistance would be received and they would be dealt with on their merits. It must be remembered that the difficulty that has arisen is not wholly and solely due to the dry season in certain districts last year. Rather is it

merely the accumulation of many seasons. Despite what has been said about the Agricultural Bank, the institution has its machinery spread throughout the various districts and has its district inspectors.

Hon. G. Taylor: The bank has done good work.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Furthermore, the bank possesses a record regarding every settler who has been assisted. Thus the officials of the bank know what has been done with money granted to various settlers. When an application is received from one of those settlers, the bank possesses the necessary information to enable the position of the applicant to be dealt with. What we did was to give an assurance that this would be done. Furthermore, for some time past the Agricultural Bank has realised that it would have to tighten up, in plain language, regarding some of its clients. In certain cases it is not in the interests either of the farmer or of the bank to continue on the same methods that have been adopted for some years past. When the bank is called upon to assist an individual settler it is only right that the bank should dictate the method of farming practice that shall be adopted.

Mr. Lindsay: That has been started too late. It should have been started years ago.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I agree that it should have been started years ago. Still, credit must be given to the bank that at this time at any rate they are endeavouring to tighten up and to adopt a policy that will be of permanent advantage to those whom the bank assists. As to the assistance rendered, we found after consultation with the merchants and from information that we gained from the respective banks—because all that machinery is required to carry the agricultural population—that neither the banks nor the merchants were disposed to panic. They realised the position and, despite the fact that it was advertised that there had been foreclosures, they had the same confidence in the country and its agricultural possibilities that we have, and realised that they had to carry on as they had been doing in the past. I could see no disposition whatever on their part to shirk their obligations. It may be, too, that they have carried people and are not prepared to carry them further unless they mend their ways. Consequently it may be that some people are disappointed be-

cause the banks and merchants refused to carry them any longer on the same terms as before. After consulting with the banks and the merchants, we could see clearly that they were not shirking their responsibilities. As a matter of fact, at first I was suspicious that there was a disposition to place all the burden on the Agricultural Bank, but eventually I found it was not so. I even heard that the Westralian Farmers Ltd. were the hardest of all. In consultation with the manager I remarked that if there was the slightest disposition to be over-generous, he would get all the applications in the world. So, too, with the Agricultural Bank. It is not a question of advertising; it is a question of meeting the genuine applications that are being made. That is being done by the Agricultural Bank, and there is a general disposition on the part of the financial institutions to see the farmers through this year.

Mr. Teesdale: Then how do you account for the long list of insolvencies? Has that been brought about by the banks or by the business men?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am quite sure that when a meeting of creditors is called it is not with the idea of eviction or of putting in the boot, but rather for the purpose of placing the farmer on a proper footing.

Mr. Teesdale: He is booted off the premises.

Mr. Angelo: A business man is put at the head of the farmer's affairs.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: And where a number of creditors have to be protected, it is very necessary. It is then quite easy for the farmer to be carried on and given a further opportunity. As to the provision of super, some time ago we met the merchants to deal with this question. At that time the requirements of the farmers had been provided and arrangements made to finance 155,000 tons of super. Taking a line from last year, when over 200,000 tons were used, the merchants were afraid that a great number of farmers would not be able to get their super. That was serious, and so we discussed it with them. Negotiations continued, and as a result I do not fear that there will be any genuine instances of farmers being unable to procure necessary super this year. I do not say they are going to get all that they apply for. One man, a member of the deputation introduced

by the members for Yilgarn and for Avon, suggested that he should be given super with which to crop 700 acres, none of which was fallowed. I told him definitely I did not think the banks would provide super on those terms. So it does not follow that all that is applied for will be given, but I say that every case will be properly dealt with, and I do not believe there will be any difficulty in respect of next season's crop. The best indication is that last year—I am subject to correction by the Minister for Railways—the railways carried 217,000 tons of super. The indication now is that already this year a larger quantity has been arranged for. That gives us a lead as to the acreage that will be cropped. So despite all that has been said, there is no need for panic as to the prospects of cropping next year.

Mr. Thomson: There certainly was at the time we were discussing it. All were sitting back waiting to see what would happen.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Not so. Nobody was sitting back. When the deputation came to me, I asked them not to advertise the fact that we had had a discussion. I thought that to advertise it would be injudicious and that the thing to do was to deal with the position. It was not a case for advertising. I knew perfectly well that there would be no difficulty in respect of the farmers' applications. They were all applying. It was a question of method in dealing with those applications. There was no need for advertisement, and no suggestion that we were shirking our obligations. When we found the merchants and banks prepared to carry their share of the burden, we co-operated with them, with the result that the position has been improved.

Mr. Teesdale: Are the manufacturers of super helping at all?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: When I was discussing this with the merchants and the Agricultural Bank trustees, I pointed out that the super companies had not taken any risks; that they disposed of their super through the merchants, who had to carry the liability. Under that system, the super people could not possibly lose, unless the Government or the big merchants failed to pay. I suggested that considering that extra liability would have to be taken this year—that is to say,

we shall be financing people whom they were not prepared to finance, and the Agricultural Bank will have to take risks—the manufacturers could afford to give us special terms for the balance of the super. Negotiations continued, and as a result the super companies have given better terms and have provided on a cash basis, which is not by any means what they do in the ordinary course. The fact remains that they did come our way, realising that it was up to them.

Mr. Teesdale: Did they name any limit?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No. After the superphosphate, financed in the usual way had been provided, then the doubtful cases that would have to be financed through the Agricultural Bank should be given these special terms. I am not quite sure how far they are prepared to go, but I know they got the necessary authority to do that.

Mr. Lindsay: I assume the Agricultural Bank is paying for the superphosphate.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Either that or it is guaranteeing the accounts.

Mr. Lindsay: And the superphosphate companies are giving you nothing.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Where no one else will carry the burden and take the responsibility, the Agricultural Bank has to do so. The constitution of the bank is such that the trustees are exercising that power. I do not think anyone would suggest they should not do it, and so we shall not quibble about the powers that the trustees have or have not. The situation had to be met. The Agricultural Bank trustees have the necessary knowledge and the necessary administrative capacity to cope with the position, and I maintain they have done the job properly.

Mr. Teesdale: Quite right, too.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: We have not done much advertising in the way of elaborate Press statements; the thing was to do the job effectively and make provision to meet an extraordinary position. I do not propose to deal with the other questions that have been raised, but this is an important matter. I give members an assurance that as far as the Agricultural Bank is concerned, the utmost is being done to meet the position, and the

trustees have all discretionary power to deal with such cases.

Mr. Angelo: How is the Agricultural Bank off for money?

MR. GRIFFITHS (Avon) [4.52]: One particular aspect of the question that has not been touched upon by any previous speaker is that of the farmers who have called meetings of their creditors, farmers not necessarily bankrupt but earnestly endeavouring to get their affairs on a business footing. They have called meetings to see whether an arrangement cannot be made whereby the Government, the banks, merchants, local storekeepers and others interested might collaborate to help keep them on their blocks and prevent their moving to the city to swell the ranks of the unemployed. I received a notification from the Merredin district that notices had been served upon various farmers to the effect that any farmer who had called a meeting of creditors was outside the pale as regards further loans for clearing or assistance from the Agricultural Bank. It may be that this arose from some specific cases and was not intended to have general application, but considerable consternation was created in the district when it was stated that special loans for clearing, upon which many of the farmers would have to depend, had been stopped. Those men had not received any previous indication of such an intention and had employed clearers, and money was owing for stores, etc. At the last minute they were told they would not get their loans, or that all loans had been cancelled.

Mr. Lindsay: Loans already granted had been stopped.

MR. GRIFFITHS: Yes. If a farmer declared himself bankrupt, I could understand the Agricultural Bank adopting that attitude, but many of the farmers affected are not bankrupt. I know a man who, if he is not granted assistance, will be forced off his farm, but in ordinary circumstances his assets would show £1,500 to the good. Yet, with a forced sale, he will be compelled to go off his farm with practically nothing. Reference has been made to many farmers having no excuse for finding themselves in financial difficulties. To suggest that many of those men are down and out through their own fault is altogether

wrong. In many districts there are good farmers and bad farmers alike who are down and out this year through the failure of their crops. I know that the experiments at Coomerin under Government supervision on land fallowed and unfallowed proved a failure. There was not sufficient moisture to give the crops on either fallowed or unfallowed land a chance. The president of the Merredin District Agricultural Society, who in previous years had won prizes for the best-kept farm and the best fallow, had an average of only two bags per acre. With all his up-to-date methods and with the best of equipment, he got a return of practically only six bushels to the acre. In many of those districts, while the position is perhaps not so bad as it was in 1914, it is very nearly as bad, especially in the area beyond Merredin and even a good deal this side of it. I have heard it ridiculed that the failure last season was at all comparable with that of 1914. I have heard it stated, "The Agricultural Bank says there are not the applications for assistance and therefore there cannot be so many people affected." Many people have not submitted applications for assistance because they knew that it would be impossible to pull through on what was offered in the first instance. It is gratifying to learn that so much has been done. I had an idea that more was being done than we were informed of. Since October and early in November I have been trying to get it understood by people in the city that conditions in the eastern wheat belt were not as bright as some folk would have us believe. In the circumstances the aggregate production of wheat for the State is surprising; it shows what can be done.

Mr. Davy: What was the average?

Mr. Latham: Eleven bushels.

Mr. Davy: Is not that the third best for the State?

Mr. Latham: Yes.

Mr. Davy: Then why compare it with 1914?

Mr. Latham: The member for Avon is speaking of certain localities.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. GRIFFITHS: City members do not know anything about it.

Mr. Latham: And would not be expected to.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: In the eastern districts are large areas where the crops have been a total failure.

The Minister for Works: How is last season to be compared with 1914 when in some districts they got nothing at all?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The wheat areas have been extended much further east since 1914 and there is now a much larger area under crop. The northern and Midland districts did exceedingly well, considering the season, and have helped to keep up the average of the State. In the eastern districts, however, things are worse than many people are prepared to admit. I had a letter from a good farmer who this year finds himself in a very bad way. I sent the letter to the "West Australian," but the paper did not publish it. I believe those responsible for that newspaper are burying their heads in the sand and pretending that things are not so bad in those areas. I do not wish to cry stinking fish or to disparage the country.

Hon. G. Taylor: You have been making a very good effort in that direction.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Still I maintain that the position is as I have explained, and why should we shut our eyes to the fact?

Mr. Davy: But you did not say that. You compared it with 1914.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: But the hon. member is comparing a totally different thing. As compared with 1914 the area now under crop is probably double.

Mr. Latham: Yes, more than that.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I received an intimation from the Bank trustees, to take to a meeting of 300 farmers at Westonia, that no super would be allowed for non-fallowed land. I admit that the idea of insisting upon fallow is a very good one, but it is a stringent condition to introduce at a time when those men are down and out. The time to introduce it was years ago when they first went on the land, instead of leaving it till a season of stress when so many farmers have got down to bedrock. If we are not going to allow superphosphate for these newly settled people, who have little or no chance of getting any fallow, we might as well extend them a welcome to the soup kitchens or the free feeds that are available in Perth.

Hon. G. Taylor: By Jove, the whining of these producers!

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Whining be damned. Nothing of the sort! It is pretty severe upon the settlers that they should have their prospective loans cancelled. If an unfortunate man is down and out, and has been obliged to hand his affairs over to a trustee, possibly nothing else can be done for him.

Many of the settlers, however, have called meetings of their creditors, with the idea of some settlement being arranged whereby they may be allowed to remain upon and work their farms. If all avenues of revenue are to be closed to them, we might as well extend them a welcome to the city.

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

ADJOURNMENT.

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [5.1]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until 4.30 p.m. on Tuesday next.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.2 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 26th March, 1929.

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

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY, PRESENTATION.

The **DEPUTY PRESIDENT**: I desire to inform hon. members that in accordance with their resolution I presented to His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor the Address-in-reply passed by this House, and received from him the following acknowledgment:—

Mr. President and hon. members of the Legislative Council, I thank you for your expressions of loyalty to His Most Gracious Majesty the King, and for your Address-in-reply to the Speech with which I opened Parliament. (Sgd.) R. F. McMillan, Lieutenant Governor.

QUESTION—WATER SUPPLY, PINGELLY.

Hon. H. STEWART asked the Chief Secretary: 1, What is the total cost of the Pingelly water supply—(a) capital, (b) maintenance? 2, What contributions for interest, sinking fund, etc., have been received?

The **CHIEF SECRETARY** replied: 1, (a) Capital expenditure at 30th June, 1928, £11,008; capital expenditure to 28th February, 1928, £11,015; (b) total cost of maintenance from the inception of undertakings to 30th June, 1928—£11,283. 2, The total accrued income from the inception to 30th June, 1928, amounted to £15,204; this has been applied as follows:—

To meet maintenance expenditure	£11,263
Contribution towards interest ..	3,689
Contribution towards sinking fund	232
	<hr/>
	£15,204

The interest and sinking fund unpaid amount to respectively £2,663 and £1,471. This represents the total deficiency at the 30th June, 1928, of £4,134.

LAPSED BILLS.

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly received and read requesting the Council, in accordance with the Assembly's Standing Order 41), to resume the consideration of the Hospital Fund Bill and the Hospital Fund (Contributions) Bill in the stages which they had reached last session:—

The **HONORARY MINISTER**: I move—

That the Assembly's message be taken into consideration after Notice of Motion No. 1.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I have just seen the typescript of the amendments which the Honorary Minister has tabled in connection with the Hospital Fund Bill, and I certainly do not think these amendments will be satisfactory to me. I therefore wish to ask the Honorary Minister whether, to help us, he will get drafted for us by to-morrow another amendment, which of course would not bind the Government but would be helpful to hon. members, and which would provide in the first place that all subsidies under the Hospital Fund Bill must go to