

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 27th October, 1926.

BILL—PUBLIC WORKS ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by Minister for Lands for the Minister for Works and read a first time.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Reserves (No. 2).

2, Roads Closure.

Transmitted to the Council.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1926-27.*In Committee of Supply.*

Debate resumed from the previous day on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates; Mr. Lutey in the Chair.

Department of Lands, Migration and Industries, Hon. W. C. Angwin, Minister.

Vote—Lands and Surveys, £79,304:

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. W. C. Angwin—North-East Fremantle) [4.55]: I was hoping that in view of the information I gave members a few weeks ago, it would be unnecessary to introduce the Estimates of the Department of Lands and Surveys on this occasion, but I am afraid that if I did not do so, some members might take exception. Possibly I may repeat some of the statements I made previously. The annual report of the Under Secretary for Lands and Surveyor General has been placed on the Table and each member has been supplied with a copy. The area selected during the year under conditional purchase and homestead farms totalled 2,022,006 acres against 1,582,815 acres during the preceding year. Those figures are exclusive of group settlement. The total number of new settlers was 995. The number of blocks allotted by the Land Board was 425, which necessitated 67 sittings of the board. The selections during the year have been principally in the Esperance district, north of Koorda, east of Pithara, east of Kalkalling and north of Westonia. A fairly large area of light land has been selected during the year and many inquiries regarding such land have been made of Mr. Bostock, the inspector of those areas. Mr. Bostock has dealt with about 4,600,000 acres of light land and, in making his report

PAGE

| | |
|---|------|
| Questions: Railways, Meekatharra stock and through trains ... | 1688 |
| Police Benefit Fund, Report of Select Committee ... | 1688 |
| Bills: Public Works Act Amendment, 1A. ... | 1688 |
| Reserves (No. 2), 3P. ... | 1688 |
| Roads Closure, 3A. ... | 1688 |
| Annual Estimates: Department of Lands ... | 1688 |

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

QUESTIONS (2)—RAILWAYS.*Meekatharra Stock Train.*

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Railways: What number of bogey trucks constitute a special stock train ex Meekatharra?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: Minimum 10, maximum 30.

Meekatharra Through Train.

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Railways: 1, In view of the inconvenience to women and children travelling to and from Meekatharra, in having to change trains at Mullewa, will the Government consider the advisability of providing a through train on this service? 2, If not, why not?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, This has already been considered, and the present practice adopted. 2, Originally carriages ran through from Meekatharra to Perth, but for health reasons it was found necessary to tranship at Mullewa to allow carriages to be cleaned. Furthermore the transhipment allows of lighter carriages being hauled between Mullewa and Meekatharra.

POLICE BENEFIT FUND AND SUPER-ANNUATION SCHEME.*Report of Select Committee.*

Mr. Hughes presented the report of the select committee appointed to inquire into the Police Benefit Fund and superannuation scheme.

Report received and read, and ordered to be printed, and to be considered at the next sitting of the House.

to the department, he gave details of the quality of land, and stated whether the subsoil was suitable for wheat growing, and whether the land not suitable for wheat was suitable for oats and sheep. Consequently the information supplied has been of great assistance to applicants for land. Many inquiries have been received for light land and the area taken up last year was approximately 1,500,000 acres. The total applications received for land during the year was 7,567, so the officials of the department have been kept fairly busy. Pastoral leases taken up aggregated 8,906,504 acres compared with 20,841,066 in the previous year. The decrease was possibly due to the drought conditions in that part of the State. A large number of persons have been applying for land and the inquiries are continuing. The actual applications received during the month of September were as follows: Conditional purchase, 594 applications for 282,398 acres; homestead farms, 58 applications for 9,078 acres; grazing leases, 46 applications for 48,723 acres; sundry areas, 50 applications; and for pastoral leases, 12 applications for 1,270,902 acres. In all, the applications for the month numbered 760. This is almost a record for one month. The districts concerning which applications for land were principally made, under c.p. conditions, were Northam 76,214 acres; Beverley 46,580 acres; Narrogin 10,172 acres; Geraldton 108,327; Esperance 19,298; Southern Cross 17,517; and for grazing areas, Katanning 9,855 and Wagin 21,866. It will be seen that the applications have been fairly scattered throughout the State. The revenue received last year was £365,327 and the estimated revenue for this year is £360,000. The estimated decrease is brought about by the falling-off in the freights from motor lorry and group sawmills revenue, and also is due to the fact that timber was cut on the Peel Estate. Motor carriage to the groups is now mostly by contract, as well as the erection of group buildings, the sawmills having been transferred and sold. The expenditure last year was £72,698, and the estimated expenditure this year is £79,304, an increase of £6,615. The bulk of this increase is due to the reclassification and grade increases. A considerable area of land has been declared for State forest purposes. In all 159,000 acres have been permanently dedicated, while 770,000 acres are in process of being so dealt with. The classification of other areas is being

considered by the Surveyor General with a view to areas most suitable for agriculture and forestry being defined. This is the first time that so large an area has been dedicated for the purpose of forestry since the days of responsible government. Pastoral leases have been appraised to a total of 17,484,800 acres. Only three appeals were lodged, and one of these was successful. The inspection of pastoral leases with a view to appraisal is proceeding where necessary. Close classification surveys have been carried out, embracing a total of 3,101,806 acres as against 2,834,204 acres during the previous year. Surveys are proceeding in the Kimberley division for tropical agriculture, and three parties are now operating there. The Surveyor General has just visited the country out from Lake Grace, where he states there is a fairly large area of good wheat land. It is his intention to put forward road surveys to open up this land almost immediately. At a later stage I will read his report. I now wish to refer to a very important matter as it affects Western Australia and its future progress. I have referred to the land for which applications have been made and approved during the last 12 months. We have nearly reached the end of our tether. Some people are of opinion that we have any amount of land that applicants can take possession of. It is true we have a large area of Crown land still available, but there are no means of communication to it. I hope to be able to convince members that the time is not far distant when Parliament will have to consider the advisability of providing transport for the development of the large areas that are still in the hands of the Crown. The area of selected and cultivable land outside the 12½ mile radius from existing railways may now be given. I will first take the areas north of the eastern railway. There has been selected, up to 40 miles from a railway and beyond the 12½ mile radius, an area of 609,300 acres. There is still vacant cultivable land up to 50 miles comprising 663,600 acres. This area includes the Ejanding and the Lake Brown-Bullfinch propositions. I will now take the areas south of the Eastern railway and east of the Great Southern railway to the No. 1 rabbit-proof fence. There has been selected up to 45 miles from a railway and beyond the 12½ mile radius, an area of 341,400 acres. There is still vacant cultivable land up to 70 miles from a railway, an area comprising 601,900 acres. Outside the 12½ mile radius from existing rail-

ways the total area selected, up to 45 miles, is 950,700 acres, and the area of vacant cultivable land up to 70 miles is 1,265,500 acres. The vacant cultivable land is only over those areas for which close classifications have already been made. The Lands Department officials realise the class of land they have to deal with, and are able to report definitely that this land is suitable for farming purposes. I will now take the land outside the South-West Division. The vacant cultivable land south of Marvel Loch to Forrestania, on a rough inspection only, comprises about 920,000 acres, up to 80 miles from a railway. These figures are exclusive of land in the Salmon Gum and Esperance districts. There is about 1,000,000 acres of land in the Salmon Gums-Esperance district that is from 12½ miles to 70 miles from a railway, which have been closely classified. At least half of this area will be suitable for wheat growing. A considerably larger area has been roughly classified. A large proportion of this is cultivable, but the exact figures are not obtainable. There is a very large scope for settlement in this State on lands that have been classified if railway facilities are afforded. I have with me an interesting map, which has not yet been seen by members. It shows in blue the area of land which was selected during the first 77 years following upon the foundation of the State. This covers an area of 12,575,902 acres. There is shown on the map in red the area of land that has been alienated and has been in course of alienation from the Crown during the last 20 years. It comprises an area of 17,566,890 acres. This indicates that the total area of land alienated and in course of alienation is 30,142,792 acres. The weak point about this area is the smallness of that which has been developed. At the very outside, taking all the land out of the 30,000,000 acres, that which has been cleared or partly cleared, sown for pasture or cereals, or used for grazing is something less than 10,000,000 acres. Only this area is in course of development. This means that only one-third of the 30,000,000 acres is at present in use. The Midland railway lands come into that, and also a portion of the Hampton Plains land. Members will realise that when development occurs on the whole area that has been taken from the Crown, on which development is increasing from year to year, the wheat production of the State is bound to increase very considerably. There is also

bound to be an increase in stock production and in the development of the wool industry.

Mr. Lindsay: These people are all land hungry. They have too much.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I rather agree with that. That is what is keeping many of the farmers poor. They have to find a large amount in land rents. The Leader of the Opposition on two occasions in this House endeavoured to get through a Closer Settlement Bill. I am pleased to say that the party on this side of the House strongly supported him. I also endeavoured to induce Parliament to pass almost the same Bill, with the exception of one clause, on another occasion. At that time the United Party and the Labour Party gave the Bill support, but unfortunately the Country Party strongly opposed it.

Mr. Lindsay: Only with regard to two clauses.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Bill was defeated on two occasions in another place. On the third occasion it was so amended that it had to be dropped. This Chamber has done the best it can by the vote of the majority of members to get over the difficulty we are faced with, in having a large area of approximately 20,000,000 acres not now in use.

Mr. Sampson: Let us have another shot.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: This State cannot stand idle. We must progress, and must bring in additional settlers.

Mr. Lindsay: We are doing that every day. People have been allowed to select areas too great in extent.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I appeal to members to assist me in this direction. The lands alienated from the Crown cover an area of 30,142,792 acres. We still have land available for possible extensions on mixed farming lines comprising approximately 38,000,000 acres, belonging to the Crown. There is land shown on the map running from Northampton to Zanthus coloured yellow. The rainfall in this area ranges from 15 inches to 71½ inches. The area comprised is 38,000,000 acres, about two-thirds of the size of Victoria and a little larger than England and Wales. This land is now available for selection. I gather from the Surveyor General that approximately 25,000,000 acres of this land are suitable for wheat growing.

Mr. Latham: It is too far from a railway.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The whole of it, however, is suitable for farming, that is for sheep or wheat.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Have you particulars of the rainfall?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. That aspect has been analysed by the Surveyor General from particulars taken day by day. The land is subdivided on the map into areas of 7½, 8, 10 and 15-in. rainfall.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The special feature is at what time of the year the rain falls.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It falls at the proper time. That is one of the matters to which the Surveyor General paid close attention. While we have that area, and while in fact there is sufficient land available, hon. members must ask themselves this question: would any Minister be justified in recommending settlers to go out into that area when it is a matter of impossibility for them to farm successfully unless means of transport are provided? Without means of transport it cannot possibly be done.

Mr. Stubbs: It would be madness to send them out there without railway communication.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yet we have men by the thousand crying out for land. Never in the history of Western Australia have there been more people coming from the Eastern States and also from overseas with money for the purpose of developing our areas. Apart from light lands adjacent to railways, the Lands Department to-day are unable to put country at the disposal of applicants. That is the position. In the interests of the State, the Parliament of Western Australia must authorise further railways so that our lands may be developed, or else we must cease to entice people to come here for the purpose of taking up land.

Mr. Teesdale: But some people who previously took up land a long way from railway communication are all right to-day.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is so. We have numbers of settlers now 40 miles from a railway.

The Premier: But the struggle is too long and wastes too many years of a man's life.

Mr. Teesdale: The motors have brought distant lands a great deal nearer.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: When the Federal Minister for Works was here

a fortnight ago, I had the pleasure of showing him the map I hold in my hand and also the map which hangs on the wall. I pointed out to him that in preparing a scheme for road-making it is almost impossible for a State like Western Australia to lay down every road that will be required for development, and that some money must be reserved for commencing development of areas outside the railway system. I do not wish people coming to this State to be led astray; I do not think any member desires that. I must repeat, and I cannot repeat too often, that unless something is done on the lines I have suggested, we must stop further land settlement in Western Australia. To show the position, I will read a report addressed to the Under Secretary for Lands on the 17th September by the Surveyor General—

I have to report having inspected the country in the vicinity of Lake Damnos, which has been rechristened Lake King by the local people, accompanied by the members of the Phillips River road board, two Newdegate settlers, and Messrs. Cornell and Corboy, members of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly, respectively, Mr. Stubbs, M.L.A. for Wagin, being also of the party. 2, This Lake King country has been the last portion of the large area under classification to be dealt with, and plans showing same have only recently been lodged at head office. 3, From the inspection made there appears to be a fairly considerable area of land suitable for cultivation, but until I had an opportunity of inspecting the classification plans on my return it was impossible, of course, to state even the approximate area of land that might be suitable for settlement. From the classification plans it seems that there are about 160,000 acres of land suitable for settlement, about 60,000 acres of which are first-class, timbered with gimlet, blackbutt, and large mallee, while the balance of the area, containing about 100,000 acres, is almost entirely mallee country, which, however, although classified as second-class, is in my opinion suitable for wheat growing, although possibly it may be necessary to give slightly larger areas than for the forest country. 4, From the department's experience, however, of similar land in the Newdegate district, I am very doubtful as to whether the Agricultural Bank will advance on much of this mallee country, and before any active steps are taken to settle it, I think that the Agricultural Bank trustees should express an opinion as to the extent to which they are prepared to go in assisting new settlers. It would be inadvisable, I think, for this department to subdivide an area which another Government department would not consider good enough to advance money upon. 5, This area is about 60 miles north-west of Ravensthorpe, and 35 or 40 miles due east of Newdegate. 6, Before anything could be done to place settlers on the land, water supplies and road access would have to be provided, but as I am leaving with the Railway Advisory

Board at the end of this week, I propose to put up any recommendations on this matter on my return. At present, of course, the area is particularly isolated, and I cannot express an opinion just at present as to how it could be economically served by a railway line. 7. The approximate locality is shown within red circle on lithograph, page 109.

Hon. G. Taylor: Do you know how much of the land is personally inspected during the peregrinations of Parliamentarians?

Mr. Corboy: Every inch of it. Never mind about your nonsense.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The inspection of Parliamentarians makes no difference, because the Surveyor General has inspected and classified the area. I thought it necessary also to obtain the views of the Agricultural Bank trustees, and they write as follows:—

The report has been considered by the trustees, and we agree that the forest country and the better class of mallee country is suitable for wheat-growing, and will justify Agricultural Bank assistance on the usual lines. The trustees consider that the country is too isolated to warrant development at the present time, and are not prepared to authorise advances until railway facilities are assured.

Mr. Latham: That is sensible.

Mr. Stubbs: That land is only 35 miles distant from the Newdegate terminus.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Hon. members must realise that to open up the country and settle it on conditions similar to those under which other parts of the State were developed, railway facilities must be provided. East and west of the Norseman-Esperance railway the same conditions prevail. In fact, that applies to the whole of that area two-thirds of the size of Victoria; and yet the Lands Department cannot recommend settlers to go there. The matter is one to which Parliament will have to give attention at an early date. I do not say that railways are required for the whole area immediately, but our attention should be directed to the subject. We should be able to say to settlers that so many years hence they will be able to get railway communication, and the settlers ought to be able to rely on the promise. Meantime roads could be cleared to allow of the land being brought into development. I regret very much that when I raised this question previously, some people disagreed with my view. When I made the statement that we had no land available for settlement, various hon. members interjected, "That has been said for the last 20 years." However, I have given on members figures covering the last 20

years. I am expecting any day to receive from the Surveyor General a report as to roads required for the development of the area at Lake King. His report will also deal with the question of water supply.

Mr. Stubbs: Those are the first essentials.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I shall do everything possible to get the matter attended to at an early date, because my desire is that people who come here looking for land shall be immediately placed on the land. I shall do my utmost to get the Main Roads Board to open roads in that district promptly, thus permitting the large area in question to be made available.

Hon. C. P. Wansbrough: Is that land available for selection now?

Mr. Corboy: Not yet. It is all under reservation pending survey.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is so. I do not believe in selection before survey. East of Kondinin there are hundreds of thousands of acres in respect of which Parliament will be asked to authorise railway construction to the extent of 25 to 30 miles. Settlers there are now as much as 40 and 50 miles out. We have in this State sufficient land to accommodate every person in Australia wanting land for years to come. Give us the railways to open up our areas, and the time will not be far distant when the clamour for land will cease by reason of everyone having had their requirements satisfied.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Presently it will be all gone.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: When it is all gone we shall have to stop. However, it is not right that people throughout Great Britain and Europe—as well as people in Western Australia—should be informed that in this State there are large areas of land which can be obtained at low rates, and that when people arrive here looking for land they should have to wait for months and months, with a risk of entirely failing to get land. Such a state of affairs is not to the credit of Western Australia, especially when we have 38,000,000 acres of land which can be used, but owing to lack of transport facilities is not available. We must try to remove the prevalent feeling of depression as to further land settlement.

Mr. Stubbs: Cannot you get money from the Migration Commission?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have applied for some, but have not yet got it. The Commission are coming here next week.

I know of intending settlers with money who have come here and have passed on to Victoria. Of course, I tell such people that they will not get land in Victoria.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: If we had been given our Closer Settlement Bill, we would be all right.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: If we had good government, we would be all right.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Government are all right. Give us the money for the necessary railways, and land settlement will go ahead.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I did not mean you to hear that interjection.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Hon. members know that we have often complained of the action of Australia House in recommending moneyed people to go to the Eastern States instead of to Western Australia. We have a legitimate grievance in that respect, because properties can be purchased in Western Australia at considerably less cost than in the East. Victoria, however, is the only Australian State that to-day has a scheme under which Australia House can tell applicants with money that they can be placed on a block as soon as they arrive. Western Australia is not in that position.

Mr. Stubbs: Evidently Victoria has bought up some big estates.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, and Victoria has set aside a certain number of blocks for the Government and so many for people with money. Consequently Australia House is able to tell migrants, "If you go to Victoria with a certain amount of money, you can obtain such and such a block if you can show you have a certain amount of money." So persons in England who have money to put into farming in Australia will go where they can immediately get the land. Unfortunately we cannot do that for them in Western Australia. Actually we have the land, if only we had the means of communication. On the other hand, Western Australia is about the only Australian State assisting moneyless men to go on the land. That applies, not only to newcomers, but also to Australians; and so we have Australians coming from the Eastern States to get land here and enjoy the financial assistance offered for its development. During the last few years, since I have been in close contact with the Lands Department and the Agricultural Bank, I have come to question whether it is altogether wise that the State should find all the money for the development of the land. I believe in assist-

ing impecunious settlers, but we should endeavour to induce moneyed settlers to come here and so get private money assisting the development of the land. Over 30,000,000 acres of land has been alienated from the Crown, and of that area only 10,000,000 has been partially developed. I am confident that if a large proportion of those areas had been given to people with money, we should have to-day a far larger area developed than we actually have; for, as the member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) has said, many of our settlers have more land than they can farm. During last year we had from members of Parliament a number of demands that the Surveyor General should go out and see some of the areas in their electorates. I too have been anxious that the Surveyor General should see some of those areas for himself. The Leader of the Country Party, together with the member for Albany (Mr. A. Wansbrough) and Mr. Burvill, M.L.C., urged the Surveyor General to visit a part of the Great Southern district. The report of that visit, dated 26th October, was placed in my hands to-day. I regret it is not so encouraging as the last I read. Still, it is of interest. Mr. Camm reports as follows:—

As approved by the Minister, I left Perth on the afternoon of the 20th instant for Katanning with a view to inspecting the country east of Pingrup and Ongerup at the invitation of the Katanning and Kent Road Boards, representatives of which accompanied me. Messrs. Thomson and Wansbrough, M.S.L.A., and Mr. Burvill, M.L.C., were also of the party. 2. The idea of the road boards was, I understand, to demonstrate the necessity for water supplies to open up the country east of Pingrup and near Lake Magenta, and also to demonstrate what was being done with the light lands in these localities and also east of Ongerup. 3. Two days were spent in inspecting the land east of Pingrup and Lake Magenta and, although a considerable portion of the area west of Lake Magenta is of a poor description, there is as disclosed by our recent classifications a fair area of second-class land, which under proper methods of cultivation would, I think, return payable crops of wheat. There are small patches of forest country scattered throughout the area which in conjunction with the inferior land would in my opinion provide good holdings, although I am doubtful as to whether these holdings would meet with the approval of the Agricultural Bank trustees, seeing that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to put more than 300 or 400 acres of first-class land in each block. There is no doubt, however, from what I saw in the settled areas that this inferior land can be turned into profitable use. 4. From Pingrup out to Lake Magenta, however, there is no water other than natural surface supplies, and it would be impossible for settlers who take up this land to do much with their blocks without dams

being excavated, and, if we are to proceed with the settlement of this country, water supplies are essential. 5, There are no dams even in the land recently thrown open east of Lake Magenta, and I am afraid that the department cannot expect the successful applicants for the blocks here to take possession of their holdings and proceed with developmental work during this summer unless dams can be sunk. I am putting up a recommendation in another file as to the provision of water supplies for this area. 6, On our return to Pingrup we travelled down the rabbit-proof fence, thence southward to Ongerup and then proceeded easterly to Needilup and on to "Jerramungup," owned by Mr. E. Hassell. The unselected land in these areas is in my opinion of a very poor description, and I do not see how it can be profitably developed, nor does there seem to be much of that class of land being worked in the selected blocks. The good land in these districts looks very well, feed being abundant, and what crops are growing look very good. 7, From Ongerup I proceeded to Borden, and thence southerly inspecting the settled areas along the Salt River. Some very fine crops were seen here, and probably one of the best seasons this district has had so far as grass is concerned is now being experienced. 8, From the Salt River I travelled by car through the Stirling Range to Mt. Barker, where I caught the train to Perth. 9, There is nothing of outstanding interest to report on this trip, which, as you know, was undertaken at the request of the local authorities referred to in paragraph 1, and beyond the provision of water supplies east of Pingrup, I have nothing of any moment to recommend. The whole district between Pingrup and Pallinup River seems to be in a very prosperous condition, shearing was in full swing in most of the properties passed through, and there is every prospect of an abundant wool clip. From information given to me by various settlers, the holdings seem to average about one sheep to two acres, which is particularly good—the contributing factor to this high carrying capacity being the ease with which water can be conserved. 10, The members of the road boards mentioned, and the various settlers were most hospitable, and were only too ready to afford every assistance in the way of transport.

I regret that the report is not as encouraging as one could have wished.

Mr. Lindsay: We are always changing our views of the quality of land.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I think the Surveyor General is well aware of that. I have read the report because some members contend that all the land down there is good. The applications that from time to time they make for railways are based on that contention.

Mr. Griffiths: I do not think the member for Latham would quite agree with that report.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am sure the member for Katanning would not.

Let me repeat some of the figures I gave on the Address-in-reply. On the 30th June last the balances of borrowers from the Agricultural Bank were, principal £3,389,683, interest £269,462, total amount of principal due for repayment £433,954. That is a fairly large sum due from one of the most prosperous sections of the community. Properties abandoned during the year were, civilians 171, ex-soldiers 204, or a total of 375. The properties sold during the year numbered 414, and the debts recovered on sales equalled £281,882. In the past, when I found people coming here from the Eastern States and overseas in search of improved properties I sent them to the Agricultural Bank with a view to their taking up abandoned properties. To-day, however, most of those abandoned properties have been sold, and consequently that source of provision for people coming here has virtually gone. During the past year losses due to the writing off and cancelling of debts have been, principal £14,702, interest £16,922, or a total of £31,624. The total losses of the bank through written off and cancelled debts amounted to £178,698. I want the member for Williams-Narrogin to take heed of that, since the Leader of the Country Party is not here.

Mr. Lindsay: That is the total for the whole of the State.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, the farmers who have had money from the bank.

Mr. Latham: Does that include soldier settlement?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: It shows that that section of the industry needs relief.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: On the contrary, it shows that the relief has been afforded already. Turning to the remarks made by the member for Beverley (Mr. C. P. Wansbrough) last night, I think he is now satisfied that the bank does advance on light lands. I want to emphasise that it is not my duty to instruct the bank as to the making of advances. Parliament has taken that entirely out of the hands of the Government. All we can do is to ask the bank to consider certain things. Personally I do not intend to instruct the bank in any manner whatever in regard to the making of advances. It makes the position of the Minister a little difficult when members go into the country and say the Government, if they so desire, can instruct the bank to make full advances.

Mr. Corboy: That has been done quite recently by the Leader of the Country Party.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Farmers have visited me on bank business and have explained they were sent to me because I could give them advances if I so pleased. On inquiry they have frankly declared they were told that by their representatives in Parliament.

Mr. Corboy: Not always by their representatives, though the member for Katanning was the worst.

Mr. Davy: It is only hearsay.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In every instance, what I did was to send them to the bank. I told them I could do nothing and the consequence was that very often they went away disappointed. I have no doubt that the Leader of the Opposition had to put up with a similar kind of thing. Members should always inform these people who go to them that they must deal with the Bank trustees and nobody else. As I said last night by way of interjection, some of the principal officers associated with the bank have had experience of our light lands and therefore they are more than ordinarily cautious. There is not a man in this country, I do not care whom he may be, who can accuse the bank trustees of ever having been harsh. There are, however, those who can charge the bank trustees with having been too lenient. The member for York (Mr. Latham) who was a member of a select committee, is well aware of that from the number of files that were examined by that select committee. And strange to say some of those men to whom the bank were most lenient were the biggest grumblers. If I had been one of the bank trustees, I am afraid I would not have advanced the many thousands of pounds that the bank did advance. It is necessary to be hard in dealing with some of the applicants for assistance. But anything that the bank trustees can do within reason to assist a man to make a home for himself they are always ready to do it. I had no intention of referring to an incident of recent date, but I think I am justified in mentioning it to the House. In speaking to one of the bank officers the other day on the subject of bank matters he informed me that he had been severely criticised in this House by one of the members. The officer read the criticism in the newspaper the next morning. Shortly after this was told to me, the officer received a visit from that member of Parliament and he said to the member, "You

are the very man I want to see; what about your criticism of me that appeared in this morning's paper; do you think it is fair, especially when I, like other members of the service, have not an opportunity to defend myself?" The member replied, "Oh don't you worry about that, don't take any notice of it." The officer said, "But I must take notice of it because you accused the bank unjustly, and the electors in your district will probably believe what you said." The officer then asked him to give one concrete instance, one that the member thought he could prove. The member gave a certain name and the bank official immediately convinced the member that the bank had stuck to that person in the hope of keeping him on the land, and that, in fact, the position was quite the reverse of what the member had stated. Then the officer asked whether the member thought his criticism of the bank was still fair. His reply was "Well, old man it amounts to this; the Government are getting too popular with the farming community and we must say something about them." The officer's retort was, "You can say what you like about the Government, but it is certainly not right that you should say we treat our clients unfairly." I ask members now whether it is right that assertions that cannot be borne out should be made in this House, so that they might be broadcast as gospel, merely for the purpose of getting at the Government because they are becoming too popular?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We have heard officers of the Government attacked in this House very often.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There is no need to do that, especially in connection with the Agricultural Bank because members should know that the Government have nothing to do with that institution. Parliament removed it from political control. I shall return now to the subject matter of the Estimates of my department. The number of Industries Assistance Board settlers who drew their clearance from the board's books during the year was 208. The number of settlers remaining on the board is: civilians 438, and ex-soldiers 907, a total of 1,345, fully and partly assisted. Hon. members are aware that I am about to introduce a Bill, the object of which will be to renew the assistance. It will apply principally to ex-soldiers. There are 928 other debtors of whom 272 have their debts placed on fixed mortgage

and are not receiving further assistance. That means that 928 are not receiving any assistance from the board; they are carrying on themselves and the board has a claim on them until their debts are paid.

Mr. Davy: Do the figures show a substantial reduction?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, 208 in the year. The total clearances to the 31st August, 1926, numbered 1,663 settlers. Those figures will show how successful the Board has been in putting the settlers on their feet financially. Most of the 1,663 are to-day driving motor cars and are in a sound position. I daresay that many would have been insolvent, or perhaps would have gone off the land altogether if it had not been for the Labour Party and the assistance rendered them. The total advances by the Board to the 31st March last amounted to £10,509,120. Of that amount £8,788,458 has been repaid. The bad debts written off and cancelled total £267,471. The excess cost of administration and interest on capital over interest, earning and discount to the same date amounted to £63,367; the loss on trading £25,319, and the total loss to date £356,157. On the 31st August last the balance owing was £1,974,221.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Is there not a profit against that loss?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is, indirectly. It will be seen that the amount outstanding is still fairly large. During the year ended 3rd March, 1926, the advances made came to £1,150,119. Hon. members should pay particular attention to the figures I intend to quote next. The repayments for the same period came to £1,240,432. The bad debts written off and cancelled came to £100,690 and the loss on trading was £51. The excess cost of administration and interest on capital over interest earning and discount came to £27,695 and the total loss for the year ended 31st March last was £128,436. The proceeds from produce for the 1925-26 season ended 31st August amounted to £849,187. It is estimated that the further receipts will be £10,557. The balance of creditors' claims lodged against surpluses on the 31st March last amounted to £233,650 or £36,383 less than last year. Since the inception of the board the total amount paid to outside creditors who lodged claims against surpluses was £327,467. If it had not been for the Industries Assistance Board, those creditors would have lost the whole lot. I

may point out also that most of the creditors that have been doing business with the Board's clients have been paid mostly in cash since the formation of the Board.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Since June, 1916.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Almost from the time of the commencement of the Board's operations. In addition to that we have paid off back debts to the extent of £327,467. For the ensuing year the super supplied to plant 592,283 acres has amounted to 21,025 tons. The prospects for the coming harvest are so good that considerable improvement in the cash returns is expected after the harvest has been gathered. According to the Board's members, the position is assured. I have not dealt with these questions at great length because I referred to them in the course of my speech on the Address-in-reply. In connection with soldier settlement, the loans outstanding with interest on the 30th June amounted to £5,345,415 and the interest outstanding was £423,602. During the year the loans approved totalled £184,850 and the loans made came to £248,649. The loans approved during the year for permanent improvements, including the clearing of 66,622 acres, came to £136,968. The Board are re-valuing the holdings and the amount to be written down has not yet been ascertained. The amount of interest concessions, bad debts, etc., and loans on revaluation to the 31st August amounted to £517,675. Of that sum £129,351 will be a charge under the special grant, the agreement in connection with which was ratified a few weeks ago. As I have already stated, the properties abandoned during the year numbered 204, but most of them have since been taken up by other settlers. I do not think I need go into the subject of soldier settlement, because I dealt with it at some length when the Bill was before the House. The question of wire netting has also been dealt with and there is no need for me to touch on that either at this juncture. It is, however, necessary that I should say a few words in connection with group settlements. As hon. members are aware, a tentative agreement has now been definitely signed under which it will be possible to establish 300 new farms. To provide water supplies in the eastern districts the cost involved will be £148,000, and for farms £300,000. The total amount applied for was £1,100,000. I am

pleased that the Commission will be here next week and in all probability something definite will be arranged in regard to the scheme. There is a difficulty, however, in respect of the creation of new groups, because no money has been allowed for roads, and it is impossible to establish group settlements unless we have provision made for roads and drainage. In this respect now, no money has been allowed, and we have not been able to make much headway. The tentative agreement was sent from Melbourne only on the 28th September last. I want hon. members to realise, and the general public to appreciate the fact that if there has been any lagging with respect to the development policy under the migration scheme the fault does not lie with the Government, the fact being that we had not any definite approval to enable us to proceed with the work. However, we did not wait for that. The first group under the new scheme has been established at Kaloornup, where we have placed 17 people from the Catterick Army Farm. At present the officers in charge of the group settlement districts are endeavouring to find areas of land already surveyed, where we can place the settlers without any necessity for the construction of roads and bridges before settlement. The fact that no funds for the purpose of constructing roads and building bridges are provided in the migration scheme, prevents us from pushing on with the establishment of new groups where such expenditure is necessary. During the Address-in-reply debate I pointed out to hon. members that in the South-Western districts last year we experienced an exceptionally dry season. Unfortunately during the winter months we experienced an exceptionally wet season. As hon. members will appreciate, an individual farmer may experience a drought or a record rainfall involving a flood, but it is all right from the individual farmer's standpoint. But if anything of that sort happens where the Government are concerned, it is all wrong, because a Government should have taken steps to avoid such a situation. That is one of the difficulties we have to contend with, for many of those opposed to the Group Settlement Scheme inevitably ascribe the position arising out of exceptionally dry or exceptionally wet seasons to the fault of the scheme, and as an indication of its failure.

Last year's drought and this year's heavy rains caused difficulties in connection with the various groups. In the first instance the weather conditions prevented all the ploughing that was necessary to be undertaken, and then later on the heavy rains prevented the seed from maturing. At present 71 groups have been disbanded and the members of those groups have been placed on individual piecework with plant on their own holdings. The remainder are on group piecework, except two who will go on to piecework during the next few weeks. I have asked the manager of the Agricultural Bank to make the necessary assessments of the properties concerned, so far as he is able, with a view to issuing the mortgages and thus enabling the men to carry on by themselves. The threatened exodus that was predicted by the member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith) and one of two other members, in consequence of the limitation of advances, has not taken place. While I will not say there is more satisfaction now, at any rate I can say that there are fewer complaints lodged at present than at any other time since I have been connected with the group settlements.

Mr. J. H. Smith: It is pleasing to know that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It shows that the group settlers realise that they must accept some responsibility.

Mr. Davy: I suppose the "grounsers" have weeded themselves out.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I wish they were all gone. Contracts have been let for the erection of cottages and dairy buildings for all the groups, with the exception of those at Kaloornup in the Busselton district. We intend to remove cottages in the Abba River district from the areas that were linked up some time ago. I have dealt with the position there already. Owing to the death of Mr. Richardson, the controller, we made an alteration regarding the officers in charge of group settlement work. Instead of having one officer as controller of the scheme we appointed three officers as senior field supervisors in charge of three separate districts, these being the Peel Estate and Denmark district, the Busselton district and the Manjimup district. The work in connection with the group settlements has increased to such an extent that one man cannot possibly cope with it. Even at present we are undermanned so far as inspectors are concerned.

Mr. J. H. Smith: It is a pity that was not done at the inception of the scheme.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We can all see what was wrong after the time has gone by! I want the member for Nelson to realise that when the group settlement scheme was started in Western Australia there was nothing to guide anyone.

Members: Hear, hear'

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We are improving on the scheme as time goes by.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I hope so.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We gather further information from experience gained in the operations of the groups, in our endeavour to make the scheme a success. Of course, it is so much easier to improve upon someone else's work than to initiate a scheme yourself.

Mr. Sampson: Then you consider that every day we are nearer to a complete success.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Last year I considered it advisable to convene a conference of field officers. Those officers came to Perth and the conference lasted for about two days. Their discussions were held in conjunction with the members of the advisory board and various subjects were discussed with the dairy expert, the Director of Education, and the manager of the Agricultural Bank. Results have proved beneficial. Subsequent to the conference a working scheme was formulated, to which I may refer later on. It has not yet been approved by the Government, and owing to some alterations in policy, phases have to be put before the Government. On the 30th September, 1926, 135 groups had been established, including six small groups. The groups upon which individual piecework had been established numbered 71 and the groups on group piecework, 62. The number of settlers totalled 2,275 and the number of group holdings 2,330. I may explain to hon. members that when a number of vacancies occur and no applications have been lodged locally, we communicate with the authorities in England asking them to send out people for the vacancies on the group settlements. It is necessary to hold those blocks open until the people arrive from the Old Country. The area of land being developed under group settlement conditions comprises 352,462 acres and the total population represents 9,580 souls. The number of cottages erected total 1,903, and the number of dairy buildings put up, 913.

The area of land sown represents 50,327 acres. Hon. members will remember that I anticipated we would have 62,000 acres sown, but owing to the dry season it was necessary to re-sow a considerable area. As the wet season started earlier than usual, we could not carry out all that we anticipated would be done. Six cottage hospitals have been erected and 68 schools that serve 122 groups. The pedigreed bulls purchased total 192; the cows and heifers departmentally supplied, 8,209; the cows privately acquired, 1,173; the pigs supplied, 3,248; the fowls on the groups—we do not supply them, but they are on the groups—total 36,020, while the horses on the groups number 1,965. This represents a total expenditure to the 30th September last on direct group settlement work alone, including buildings, of £3,619,593 6s. 10d. Regarding the group hospitals, the capital expenditure involved represented £15,831 4s. 9d., the annual building maintenance necessitating an expenditure of £293 and the equipment cost £2,400. In addition, salaries and incidentals represent an expenditure of £7,413. As to group schools, they involve a capital expenditure of £30,914, necessitating an annual expenditure on building maintenance of £428. In addition to that, equipment cost £3,844 and the cost of maintenance £296. Salaries and incidentals represent an expenditure of £13,345. Regarding the expenditure on roads and drainage work for group settlements, exclusive of the Peel Estate, hon. members will be interested to know that £326,859 19s. 2d. was spent from State funds for the provision of roads, while £269,478 3s. 2d. was provided from State and Commonwealth funds on a pound for pound basis for the construction of further roads. In addition, £39,359 4s. 11d. was spent on drainage works. Regarding the expenditure on the Peel Estate, tramways cost £59,178; surveys £12,262; roads, of which 133 miles were constructed, and bridges, £202,019; while 392½ miles of drains cost £445,903, or a total of £719,362. There are one or two small drains on the Peel Estate that have to be attended to yet. On one portion of the estate there is a fair area of swamp land but it would cost about £15,000 to drain it. That is regarded as more than the value of the land, particularly as the money would be principally expended in draining private property through which the drains would have to run in order to take the water to the sea. At present I do not propose to

undertake that work because the expenditure of the money would principally benefit private landowners.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Could you not tax those people?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The board might do that, but it would not be advisable for the Government to do anything at present. The swamps I refer to can be used during summer months for the growing of feed and consequently I think we can get over the difficulty. In my opinion it may be necessary to link up some of the groups on the Peel Estate or else abandon them altogether. The blocks affected will be few in number. They may total 14 or 16 or perhaps one or two more. Portion of the area to the eastward has not turned out very satisfactorily. I can assure hon. members that the area will have a proper trial before anything is done along the lines I indicate. At the present time the advisory board have vacant blocks there with a view to dealing with the position later on. It is not possible to put men there at present.

Mr. Latham: Is that on the Bateman Estate?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The area is out towards the Serpentine. Just before the death of Mr. Richardson—we miss him very much in connection with group settlement, because he had everything at his finger tips—we planted some veldt grasses obtained from Crawley. Some of the grass was taken out of a type of soil similar to the sandy stretches of the Peel Estate, and we hope that will overcome the difficulty regarding pastures. Those grasses have grown very well in the sandy soil of Crawley and King's Park. It has yet to be proved that the grasses can be established at the Peel Estate, but should that be the result of the experiment, we may be able to plant the grasses in similar sandy soil in the Abba River district. Should this prove successful there will be no necessity to abandon any of those groups, hence the reason for not dealing with them further at present. I was informed that a large quantity of the seed could be obtained in King's Park and I made inquiries to ascertain whether the seed could be planted in sandy soil. I understand from the experts that on the strength of what has been published in various works, it is considered better to plant the grass by packing the roots than to plant the seeds. It is also considered that the seeds will grow better where the soil has not been disturbed by ploughing or cultivation.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I was dealing with group settlement and had pointed out that we have made a change in the system of administration. I say frankly that group settlement is not altogether satisfactory to me. When group settlement was introduced I as a member of the House felt that I had a responsibility equally with the Government of the day that initiated the scheme. I am still a believer in group settlement, and I think that eventually it will turn out successfully, without great loss to the State. Realising that, it has been my one endeavour since taking control of the department to carry out the system that was first evolved, giving it every possible trial with a view to making a success of it. Experience, however, often shows the possibility of effecting improvements. For a considerable time I have felt that there has not been sufficient individual assistance from the settlers themselves. Under the system as carried out many of the group settlers—not all of them—seem to be of opinion that they should get as much as they can out of the Government. If group settlement is to be successful, that cannot be allowed.

Mr. Sampson: You find that everywhere.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: Yes, it is not peculiar to the groupies.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: With the Advisory Committee, I have considered the matter. That was one reason why I asked the senior foremen and field supervisors to discuss the various methods adopted and suggest any improvements that would tend to make the scheme a success. Since then the senior officers have been invited to put up propositions that might result in the groups being made more successful in future, particularly the new groups under the latest migration agreement. The greatest disability in group work—I think the Leader of the Opposition is fully aware of it—has been to make the settler realise that he is building a home for himself, to get rid of the idea that he is working for the Government for wages and that, no matter how things go, the Government will be compelled to stand by him and pay him wages for all he does. Members are aware that last year I received a deputation from some members of the Country Party, who felt very strongly that we should pay a group settler for everything he did on the group, no matter what it was. I have known group settlers to refuse to put

down a deep furrow to drain their land unless they were paid for it. The men who adopt that attitude will never make successful farmers, and will never make homes for themselves, which is the principle underlying group settlement. The aim is that the settlers themselves should put something into the land. The settlers had no capital except their labour and thus it was expected that the settlers, by their spare-time work—we were paying them for eight hours a day—would put in capital in the shape of work over and above that for which they were paid. There are 2,275 group settlers and many of them have carried that idea into effect. Others have done nothing except what they were paid for. My aim and desire has been to give the group settlers every opportunity and every chance to carry on successfully. The Advisory Committee have given this matter careful consideration. During the past fortnight I have had two conferences with them with a view to producing a scheme that would bring about an improvement in the working of the groups. The committee advise that while the settlers are on sustenance, the group system should prevail, but there should be more individual work. They also suggest that machinery should be provided whereby a man could be encouraged to take a greater individual interest in his holding, and that the Government should lay down beforehand what amount they would be prepared to advance as a maximum for each class of work to be carried out on each block. So much would be allowed for clearing, buildings, stock, ploughing, seeding, manures etc., and the group settler before starting would have a fair idea of the assistance he would receive from the Government. The committee are of opinion that before a settler is clear of the group he should have at least 45 acres under pasture if the land is first class, and at least 60 acres under pasture if the land is second class. With 10 cows and the progeny he should then be in a satisfactory position to make a success of his holding. We are of opinion that out of the 45 acres a good settler should be able to clear one-fifth of it in his spare time. I think it was the intention of the Leader of the Opposition at the outset that the Government should not pay for the whole of it, but that the settler should show his interest and desire to make a home for himself by putting in some of his capital, namely, his labour, to make a success of his block.

Mr. Stubbs: He has no right to be there if he does not take that point of view.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Unless that is done, we shall have to keep men on the groups for three or four years, give them fair wages, although they have no rent to pay, and immediately the wages are stopped, off they will go. If they have an interest there is a much better chance of keeping them on their holdings.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Many of them have done that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I said so, but a large number have not done so. A scheme has been submitted to me with the strong recommendation of every member of the Advisory Committee, and in all probability it will lead to a change in group settlement. Under the scheme each man will be put more on individual effort. There has been a good deal of complaint—members of the Royal Commission will recollect this—that some of the men when on sustenance did not do their fair share of work, with the result that the good men came down to the level of the bad men.

Mr. Lindsay: That is correct.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Consequently, clearing was costing considerably more than the value of the work done. We tried to overcome that difficulty by establishing the piecework system. That has overcome the difficulty to a large extent because we do not pay for more than the work they do, but we have the greatest difficulty to get men, after they have cleared nine or 10 acres of land, to leave the clearing and take on ploughing. They do not seem to realise that their future success depends upon the pastures, which take time to grow and must mature before stock can be run on them. The men find they can make more money out of clearing than out of ploughing.

Hon. G. Taylor: If they considered their own interests they would go on to the ploughing.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Of course they would, as soon as they possibly could. Here is a digest of what is proposed—

Area necessary, first-class 45 acres, second-class 60 acres; stock, 10 cows and progeny; interest on cows to be capitalised until 15 cows are in profit; settlers to do one-fifth of necessary work in their own time. This will give an estimated cost of approximately £1,800 on first class land and £2,000 on second-class land. Individual equipment and individual piecework after three months on sustenance to encourage settler to take keener interest and realise that his own effort is essential to suc-

cess. Settler to be advised of maximum advance for each class of work on each block. Supervision to ensure proper seasonal operations and avoid excess work such as falling to the neglect of ploughing and sowing.

Perhaps there will be some opposition to the proposal but if anybody can put up a better scheme the Advisory Committee will welcome it. We have had four years' experience of some of the groups and this scheme is based on the experience gained. If we intend to make group settlement a success, it is urgently necessary to have greater individual effort and a greater realisation on the part of the men that they are making homes for themselves and that the assistance granted to them would not have been made available in any other part of the world and never before was granted in any part of Western Australia. I intend to submit the scheme to Cabinet at an early date, and if it is agreed to, we intend to make a start as soon as possible to build group settlement on a more solid and permanent basis than in the past. My aim and desire is to make it a success. No one in the State would regret more than I would if group settlement proved a failure. It is the duty of every member to assist the Minister in control of group settlement, whoever he may be, to ensure that the settlers will be able to make a living. At the same time the group settlers must realise that the State has interests that must be protected, and has incurred liabilities equal to, or greater than, those of most of the men placed on the land. A large number of men on the group settlements are doing well. Others, however, are making but little attempt to create homes for themselves. Some of the last words I heard the late Mr. Richardson say were, "We shall have to take extreme steps with some of these people." He gave me the number of the group. He went on to say, "Some of the men will not till their soil for the purpose of making a small garden in which to grow their own vegetables, but prefer to buy their requirements from Osborne Park." This cannot go on. Men who take no greater interest in the scheme than this, must go. Since we have adopted a decided and strong stand in regard to a limitation of advances, since the settlers have come to realise that those who stay must endeavour to make homes for themselves rather than for ever rely upon the Government, since they understand that the Government have no intention of, as

it were, spoon-feeding them, beyond what is considered to be a fair thing, there have been fewer complaints from group settlers than at any time during the past two years, and the settlers are taking greater interest in their work. The advisory committee have their heart and soul in the scheme. The Director of Agriculture told me on Tuesday morning that if something was done in the manner suggested, they would be able almost at once to weed out the men who will not work or help themselves. They will know who is likely to make a success, and remove at an early date those who are not in the same category. This scheme of development is what the State requires. I have given it my heartiest support from the start. We must have increased population. We cannot bring families to the State without making provision for them so that they may make homes for themselves. We are not situated as the other States are, with big industrial centres that are capable of absorbing large numbers of people within the metropolitan area. The only place where we can settle married people is on the land. When we have settled them on the land and they have developed their areas, I think, as the population increases, our secondary industries will follow. The present time is the crucial time. The future will speak for itself by way of increased population and the advancement of the State. Married men with families must be placed on the land. In the wheat-farming districts no accommodation is provided for such people, therefore the only hope of placing them is to put them on the land. We have the land. If next week, when the Commission meet, they will agree also to include wheat land as well as dairy-land in the scheme, we shall have an opportunity of launching out in the wheat farming industry. That has not yet been approved, but we hope it will be. In that way we shall be able to extend the work greatly. The delay that has occurred has not been the fault of this Government. The fault lies entirely with the Commonwealth and British authorities. They have only recently approved of our scheme, which was submitted to them on the 23rd January. No approval was given until Mr. Jepp passed through a few weeks ago with the Prime Minister. I told him what information we had, and of the letter that had been written to us. He said, "You are in the same position

as you were before." He agreed to telegraph to Melbourne at once. In September last, however, I received definite information of the approval of the 300 farms. Group settlement will in future be better for the State, and better for those who are engaged in it. Only those who can show that they are suitable should be allowed to remain in the scheme. If they are not suitable, they will have to make room for others. We cannot continue as we are doing now. It is no use beating about the bush. The Advisory Committee are very dissatisfied. They never know where they will finish. I admit that this year has been unfortunate owing to the dry summer and the wet season that followed. That kept us back a little. We want as early as possible to place men on their individual effort to show what they can do for themselves. That is the only way by which we can make the scheme successful. I have never lost confidence in group settlement. Money that has been expended on the scheme has been obtained at a low rate of interest. Any loss that is made will practically be covered. This includes two-thirds of possible losses on equipment and stock. The other authorities stand responsible for £200 and the State for £100. That is an improvement in the financial aspect of the scheme which will be very beneficial to the State. I believe that group settlement will eventually prove of great good to Western Australia. It will be the means of keeping within the State large amounts that are sent out for necessary products. Manjimup would not exist to-day but for group settlement. Butter and cheese factories have now been established there by private enterprise, and have been made possible because of the surrounding group settlements. They are now competing one with the other for the trade of settlers.

Mr. J. H. Smith: It is proposed to start another at Northcliffe.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have not heard of that. Four years ago group areas were nothing but bush land. To-day in the group settlements we have 50,000 acres under pasture. That shows what has been done in a short time. As we are to-day reaping the benefit from expenditure of State money in the wheat belt a few years ago, so in a few years hence shall we reap the benefit of our expenditure in the dairying industry. Any scheme that the Committee puts up, that is deemed to be of importance, it is my duty to

endeavour to carry into effect. I want members interested in that part of the State to impress upon the settlers that they must be expected to do something for themselves.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That applies to everyone.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It has not been so with some group settlers. As I told Sir Howard d'Egville, I attributed a good deal of the dissatisfaction that the migrant settlers have expressed, to the statements that have appeared in the English papers. On the last occasion when I went through the Busselton area I attended 26 meetings of group settlers. In almost every case I was greeted with the remark that England was providing all this money for them, and that they ought to have it. I cannot blame the settler, if he finds it stated in the English Press that England is providing money for the greatest scheme for the settlement of her people that has ever been known in the Dominions; that it is providing for Australia alone £34,000,000. As a matter of fact, no money is being provided by the English Government except portion of the interest. For every £750,000 that is expended, they provide £130,000, their share of the interest for ten years capitalised. The Commonwealth Government are raising the money. These people come to the conclusion, after reading reports in the English papers, as they have a perfect right to do, that the English Government are providing the money. I took the opportunity of disabusing their minds on the point. I have referred to the quantity of stock carried on the groups. To-day there are 9,382 cows and heifers on country that did not carry a hoof three years ago. But for the dry summer last year that number might have been greater. The people of the State may rest assured that the scheme will turn out a success, and that very small loss will be made upon it. Migration is going on as usual. I am pleased that so many people are coming to the State and paying their own fares. This shows that the eyes of the world are directed towards Western Australia. If people cannot get here as assisted passengers, they pay their own fares. We have had a larger number of these people for the last 12 months than we have had for some years. We cannot borrow money on account of these people at reduced rates.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They should count in the scheme.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Not in the latest scheme. The hon. member must

know that very well. The Commonwealth will allow nothing at present for third-class passengers paying their own fares, but will allow money only in the case of assisted and nominated passages. We made one little innovation this year in regard to the Council of Industrial Development. This Council has been doing fairly good work. The Council comprises officers of the State service, who have no connection with the outside business. The innovation is that an exhibition was held in conjunction with the Geraldton Show. If the manufacturers of the State would assist in extending this work, I feel sure the result would be beneficial in the direction of a greater consumption of locally-made articles. I have been informed that the exhibition was the principal attraction at the show. More people visited the exhibition hall than visited any other part of the grounds, owing to the great interest that was taken in Western Australian products. This scheme could be extended to other parts of the State, thus advertising local products better than has ever been done. I had not intended to speak so long, but I wish to emphasise again—I do not think I can emphasise it too often—that unless Western Australia can have further developmental railways at an early date, we must cease inviting people to come here, because the Government will not be able to supply them with land. I want hon. members to realise that phase of the position. Last year I stated that two million odd acres of land had been taken up, of which area over 1,500,000 acres were light land within 12½ miles of a railway. I have shown to-night that here we have a huge area of new territory, two-thirds the size of Victoria, equal in size to England and Wales, with a reasonable rainfall ranging from 15 inches down to 7½, a rainfall, moreover, coming at the proper season of the year for cereal growing. We must either cease inviting the world at large to come here, or else build additional railways. It would be a disgrace if we had to discourage the peopling of our country while so large a territory is lying idle. I trust that steps will speedily be taken to overcome the difficulty. I have every confidence in Western Australian land settlement, which has never before shown such vitality. Applications from intending settlers are being received from all over Australia and from overseas. Moneyed men want to come here for the purpose of taking up land. They realise that this is the most promising State of all. It

is our duty to avail ourselves of the opportunity which exists, and to people this State with prosperous settlers to the benefit of every worker in Western Australia.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [8.3] I have listened with great interest to the speech of the Minister for Lands. His department is highly important, covering Lands and Surveys, the Agricultural Bank, the Industries Assistance Board, Soldier Settlement, Group Settlement, and Migration. As regards land settlement, there is always a reason why we can go on with the work; and the reason is agriculture, the one great industry that is open to us. Unfortunately mining has been on the wane for years. Mining was the stand-by of Western Australia for many years, and brought the State into prominence. It produced almost untold wealth, but it is no longer doing as well as it did even two years ago. Each year we get somewhat smaller results from the mines, and so we have to turn to the other great industry. For me agriculture has been of special interest because it gives an opportunity of taking thousands of working men without money away from the ruck, thus affording them a chance in life. Agriculture is a permanent industry. It means the creation of wealth year by year, and that wealth need not be a diminishing quantity. It should be an ever-increasing quantity. So far as one can judge, there will be 400,000,000 more people in the world at the end of the next 20 years. I do not suppose that statement means much to some members, but it means a great deal to those who have considered the question of feeding the world and the question of the world's available unsettled lands. To me those factors seem to guarantee the future of agriculture. I have dealt with the matter time and again, pointing out that it is the increase of population that has put up the price of agricultural produce. We know that countries which a few years ago took very little wheat are now taking considerable quantities. Recently a Japanese professor was asked what was the greatest need of Japan, and he replied, "Someone to grow food for our ever-increasing population." The Japanese will have to buy food because so little of Japan's surface can be cultivated. In that country, with its teeming millions, only about a sixth of the surface admits of cultivation. Therefore the

Japanese will either have to manufacture goods and buy their food from other countries, or else obtain more territory for their people. It does not matter much whether those engaged in agriculture do or do not spend time in considering these questions. It is for us to consider them, and consider them without delay. We must realise the world's position in this respect. It is singular that population should have increased so rapidly during the last century, and should be increasing so much more rapidly at present. Wheat is 5s. or 5s. 6d. per bushel to-day, and has been at good prices for some years. This is not the result of the comparatively small quantities of wheat being taken by nations who did not eat wheat before. It has come about because the whole world has a greater need for quantities of food to feed the ever-increasing numbers of people. Accordingly the agriculturists have a very good prospect. That is the reason why the Government of Western Australia can do what they are doing. With wheat at 5s. we can do very much more than with wheat at 3s. Equally, with wheat at 6s. it is possible to farm land that could not possibly be farmed with wheat at 4s. It is not a question that requires much calculation. If it costs 30s. to farm an acre, then it requires ten bushels of wheat to pay for the mere cropping and taking off the crop when wheat stands at 3s., as it did a few years ago. At 5s. the 10 bushels would leave a profit of £1. So we are able to farm land which could not be looked at a few years ago. I hope the agriculturists, and particularly those who have farms to sell to people coming here with money, realise that their land is becoming more valuable. Because of the price of wheat we can farm our light lands. The Minister said that a good deal of money had been lost years ago through the farming of light lands. That is true, but the cause of the loss was the low price of wheat. Anyone with interest in his work must realise that it is the price of wheat which makes development possible in Western Australia. The reason is not that land produces more than it did a few years ago. In this State there are still many thousands of acres of light land which can be utilised. The Minister said there was a great deal of land still to be opened up. I believe that that is so. Some years ago all the land from Burracoppin to the sea was classified, and a great deal of it was found to be first-class,

though not so large a proportion as one would like. To-day, however, the position is altogether changed; and, if I read the signs aright, the change will be permanent. Therefore we can face the question before us. It is no use, however, talking about the building of railways unless we build lines when they are authorised. Some railways which were authorised years ago are not built yet. Still, cheap money is now obtainable, and therefore we ought to build all the lines authorised and put in hand other lines which can be made to pay. We should not hesitate. We should lay down a railway policy, consistent of course with safety, and consistent also with the quality of our land and with the type of people we can get to work it. There should be no trouble about providing railway communication. It is most unsatisfactory to send officials into a district such as that recently visited by the Surveyor General. No doubt that officer had previous reports on the district. If he went there merely to make a first inspection of it, he would not be able to do much in a few days. I do not know whether hon. members realise that one cannot see very far to the right or to the left when travelling through uncleared country. To inspect land so as to see a quarter of a mile to right and left on a block of 80,000 acres means that one has to travel 200 miles in making the examination. However, our lands have always proved a little better than the classification, the reason being that our classifying officers have consistently erred on the side of caution. Let us get it into our minds that development is now rendered possible by the growing population of the world and the increased price of agricultural produce. To-day wheat stands at 5s. 6d. per bushel, and that value is pretty firm. The price of wheat is better now than it used to be. Victoria established its butter industry when the price of butter was 6d. or 8d. per lb.

Mr. Heron: It was as low as 4d.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: A few years ago the average price of butter was 1s., with 1s. 6d. as the out-of-season price.

Mr. E. E. Johnston: There was a State bonus in Victoria.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes. To-day the average price of butter is about 1s. 6d., while the out-of-season price is about 2s. That change has been brought about by the greater demand for butter. Thus there is a better opportunity for people to

go on the land and produce butter. And so it is with all foodstuffs. We must always bear in mind that we are competing in the world's markets. Prices are not governed by the quantity of food we use here. If there were 3,000,000 more people in this State to-day, it would not make a farthing per bushel difference in the price of our wheat, because we would still have a great deal of wheat available for export. It is from the world's markets, to which we send our produce, that we get our prices. Let us always remember that only about 40 per cent. of the earth's surface can be cultivated, and that a great deal of the 40 per cent. is already cultivated. Let us realise that if we are to hold this country, we must produce food for those other countries which are not so fortunately situated. I have said let us build the authorised railways and then authorise other railways that will enable us to settle a large number of people. Let us build roads too. We have cleared and constructed thousands of miles of roads through the settled districts. For the last 15 or 16 years it has been the policy to clear roads for those settled on the land and to put in water supplies also. I am glad to hear the Minister will go on with that work.

Mr. Marshall: You are not surprised?

[Mr. Lambert took the Chair.]

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But let us realise that it is a great co-operative scheme, this work of land settlement. We waited 80 years for men of experience and money to come to this country. But they did not come, and so we had to devise means of settling our own men of little capital and less experience on the land. Consequently we had to find the whole of the money. The wheat belt was developed only when we amended the Agricultural Bank Act to provide for full advances against clearing and fencing. It could not be developed before, because when we offered only 75 per cent. advances to men who had no money, they could not do the work. When we liberalised the bank and advanced to the full against improvements, the thing was done. People said it was a great risk. But in any new country you have to sink money before you can get anything out of that country. You would not get anything out of even a 100z. gold mine unless you first had money for the putting down of the shaft and the erection of machinery. The Minister has said

that men with money go to Victoria because they there find land ready for them. Of course in Victoria they have small irrigation schemes, and Australians are not very anxious to settle on small blocks and pursue intensive culture. Even here at, say, a place like Gosnells, you do not find many people anxious to take up small blocks. Very few people are inclined to face intense culture, which is very exacting work, requiring greater knowledge than is required for simpler processes on larger areas. It is far more difficult to make a living out of three or four acres of oranges than out of 300 or 400 acres of wheat. However, Victoria does not offer anything like the advantages we can offer to men of money. Such men go to Victoria because in London there are a great many Victorian people. The business firms of Victoria have their branches in London. Victorian banks have their branches in London. There are in London buyers for Victorian houses and, in addition, many Victorians are resident there. Naturally so many Victorians come into contact with monied people thinking of farming in Australia, and equally naturally the Victorians induce those people to go to Victoria. I have said that land settlement under our method is a co-operative scheme, offering advantages to all in Western Australia. In every bag of wheat produced there are five grains for you, Sir, and five grains for everybody else in the State. It is the wealth produced from the land that makes possible this city and maintains factories turning out ceiling boards and other material. So we get our return in that way. We do not ourselves find the money for land development, but we pledge our credit to some other country that lends us the money, and we lend it to the individual on the land, who, in turn, pays us interest on the amount. The indirect advantage is all with the public. Of course there are advantages for the man who gets the block and goes on the land. But should we be justified in coming here and asking for millions of money for this work if the advantages were exclusively with the man who takes up the land? Of course not. Still we could not exist in this country except for the wealth produced from the land. This year somewhere between 15 and 20 million pounds' worth of wealth in wheat and wool and other produce is being taken from the lands in Western Australia. Of course that money is used for our industry and trade, to maintain merchants and par-

sons and educationists and lawyers, and help us provide for all our wants. So, as I say, it is a co-operative scheme. We allow the Government to borrow, on the credit of the country, money that we may lend to the man on the land. During the five years when I was head of the Government we lent in this way 64 per cent. of all that we borrowed. The result was that a deficit that looked like being a fixture, that could not be removed with the revenue possible in 1919, was permanently removed by the borrowing of about eight millions of money that was loaned to individual farmers, whose duty in turn it was to create wealth. What happened? Our railways improved their position by about £600,000 largely as the result of the expenditure of that eight millions. So even in the direct gain on that one public utility we got the interest on the money we had advanced. Is there any other industry that would pay so well, that would do so much for the country as this great primary industry of the land? Of course not. And there is no other industry we can be so certain about, for people must eat and must pay for their food. Of course you talk about the "poor cocky," you people who live in the more comfortable surroundings of the metropolitan area. If we went on to the roof of this building, we could look down upon houses housing one-half the population of the State, houses constructed at a cost three times as great as that of the houses housing the more contented and better-provided-for other half of the population of the State. When we face the development of a great territory, such as we possess, with the aid of men without money we have to find the money for them. There are people who say continually, "Why not try to bring out men with money." I was a banker for many years, and so I have a fair respect for money: but I have a far greater respect for good flesh and blood, for men of grit, of strength and of intelligence, men who will do things. Of course, other things being equal, I would give preference to the man with money. But if it came to choosing between an indifferent man with £1,000 and a good solid man with a wife and family, a man of grit and strength, a man willing to work, but without money, why of course in this new country there would be no doubt about which I would choose. I can point to men who started on the land without anything a few years ago. Men who were on the wharf at Fremantle in 1909, and a number of civil servants, went out on the land in the early part of 1910. During

the last 15 years they have created more than £200,000 worth of wealth, and they will repeat it within the next 15 years. So it is the man we want, as the Minister repeatedly pointed out. I do not know of any better investment. There are those who ask why it is whenever one enters upon any work at all one has to pay to the Government taxes and fees and fares. If you have any business at all there is taxation to pay. One never ceases to pay. The more one does the more he has to pay to the Treasury. The general taxpayer, while thinking he has to carry the load, actually reaps the reward arising from land development. Let us open our eyes to the position, and then we shall not go forward in any hesitating, cramped fashion. The time has come when the Empire has to see to it that there is greater production of food and wealth. Australia has reached the time when she must have more people. It is of no use arguing with me that the more people we bring to the country the less work there will be to do. There always has been unemployment when we have had no immigration, and there always has been work when we have been bringing in plenty of people. Unless we bring people to Australia, Australia cannot be defended and our children's children will be left defenceless. Let us see to it that we keep this country for our own race. Let us tell the electors that there can be no certainty of work in this country unless we keep on expanding our population. It is popular for some members to tell the electors that new arrivals take work from those that are here. That, however, is not the sort of campaign that will get votes. It is not a fact that the people who come here make less work, but it is a fact that the more we bring here, the more work will be created, and if we want to live in safety we must have a greater population. Look at the position in China to-day. There are three armies there that are fighting in the modern way. Thirty years ago you could send an army consisting of a handful of troops into China and they would have been able to hold their own. To-day there is an army there under the influence of the Bolsheviks, the Reds from Russia, another controlled by Japan, and a third army to some extent under the guidance of Great Britain. All those armies are well equipped with modern weapons and have been taught by experienced officers how to fight in the modern way. After all this fighting is over the Chinese army will

be a great force. Of course, some will have gone, but as there is a population of over 450 millions, the few that may be killed will not be missed. At the same time, they are learning to fight, and they will prove a world danger. Quite apart from all this, too, China is becoming a manufacturing nation. Every nation in the world wants to manufacture and so, of course, China likewise desires to place herself on the same level as other nations. And they will manufacture very cheaply, too. They will be, in that respect also, a serious menace to our own people in the Old Land. A great many people are against migration, against peopling this country of ours, except by the natural process. But if we are to increase our population in that manner, it will take us many hundreds of years to exhaust the room that we have available. I dare say we could put a ring around Australia and be quite happy. We could get enough to eat and do enough work to meet requirements. But if we adopt that attitude, we shall not hold Australia for long. We must have people and we must have them for the land. The Minister has told us that there are no great secondary industries in Western Australia, though there are some that are doing a little more each month. I daresay that in time our factories will increase in importance, but in Australia generally, under the system that has grown up, they will never be able to hold their own with the factories of other countries. So our duty becomes quite clear; we must settle the land. We can take John Brown and say to him, "Because we like you we want to give you a chance." My great delight in life has always been to give someone a chance to make a start. I look back upon that with a great deal of pleasure. I shall regret very much leaving you all when my time comes to go.

Mr. Angelo: This is the first time I have ever heard you in a pessimistic mood.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But I am not going yet.

Mr. Angelo: That is good.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I expect to live until I am a hundred, and I suppose I shall be in this House for another 25 years. Throughout that period I shall look back upon my actions in taking men from the ruck and giving them a start. Many of those men responded and have done well. As it was a great pleasure to me, so I have no doubt it will be a pleasure to others asso-

ciated with political life, to provide opportunities for people to make good. This is almost the last country to be settled, and when the history of the world comes to be written, or the history of the development of this continent, Western Australia will be referred to as the last of the States to be settled. I do not know whether you, Mr. Chairman, have read the book written by Professor Shann on the settlement of Western Australia since 1829. There you will see something of the tribulations of the settlers from 1829 on. It is a delightful book.

The Minister for Lands: But is the information reliable?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes.

Mr. Sleeman: Does it deal with the group settlements?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, with the group settlements beginning in 1829 and 1830, long before the hon. member was born.

Mr. Panton: This is his second time on earth.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Then he must have been a jolly good chap the first time he was here, because you are never the same twice. However, he is not so bad just now. The book to which I referred is really worth reading. It deals with the trials and the wonderful courage of the early settlers, and it describes the work that yet has to be done. But we now do not ask the people to suffer the privations of the earlier settlers; we would not like to do it. Neither would we like to go at the slow pace at which they went in those days but of course it was brought upon them by necessity. They began by landing on the beach and they built their homes out of bush timber and scratched around for food. In connection with recent land settlement we have advanced a great deal of money and it has proved an investment that should satisfy the greatest Jew in the land. We have had results directly and indirectly and we shall reap the harvest and it will be reaped also long after every person in this Chamber has passed away. Let us face our problems, because they must be faced in the interests of all the people. Let us face them so that we may keep the country going and so that food can always be had for our people. Let us face them so that we may build up a population. Let us face them because they give us the opportunity to lift men from the ruck. There is one member in this House who should have gone on the land years ago. He can produce most successfully the most difficult

thing; he is the kind of man we want scattered about the country. He is the man who could give the lead to others. We are not easily driven. I do not know that we could drive the Minister for Lands very far. The task would be very difficult because British people are not easily driven. They are, however, easily influenced and comparatively easily led, but they are best led by example, and they respond fairly readily. Particularly is that so with the man on the land. Throughout the country the men who are the most successful in the management of their farms are the men of that type. I heard to-night for the first time that it was the Minister's intention to make drastic changes in the methods of group settlements. It is all a question of management; there is no doubt about that. It is also a question of work. On the land you do not get anything unless you work for it. There is no room for striking or go-slow, or any accursed thing like that, that people can do when they are drawing money from others in return for their labour. There must be work in the country. The men who are there have worked and they are willing to work. Of course we cannot guarantee men, but we can guarantee the land, and we should see to it that the right men are kept. It is not an easy matter, but it ought to be possible. The original idea in connection with the group settlements was that the settlers themselves should say when a man ceased to be a decent worker.

The Minister for Lands: They would not tell.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I said that was the original intention.

The Minister for Lands: It was a very good idea.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: They did it for a bit.

Mr Lindsay: A very small bit.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: They got rid of a few people. Later the foremen were allowed to get rid of some of the settlers, but that did not work quite fairly, and so there was a change. Some stayed that should not have stayed. But you find everywhere people who should not be where they are. We cannot stop doing things because there may be a few who will not work. If we did that we would never manage at all. It is all a question of management and control, a question of doing the right thing. Someone said a member of Parliament should always do right. We should realise

that if we do right, we should not be spending most of our time in rectifying wrongs.

The Minister for Lands: If we always did right, we would never do anything. We would be afraid of making mistakes.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No. The Minister misunderstands me altogether. We would not get the results if we did not do what was right. I am not referring to the Minister at all.

The Minister for Lands: I know that.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If we endeavour to do right, to adopt right plans and right policy, to put the right men in control and to set a right course, then we shall have done the right thing. In those circumstances the result is more likely to be good than if the right thing is not always attempted. A Federal Commission is coming to Western Australia. It is a pity that group settlement and land settlement did not proceed as the Minister decreed. We are responsible for the money that is borrowed. It is our land, our work and our responsibility. We do want help, and we are getting it for the first time. We took all the risks relating to land settlement, until the time of the first soldier settlement. Now we are getting some help from the Federal Government and help from the Imperial Government as well. My agreement with the Imperial authorities, which the Minister thought was right, and I considered was fairly liberal, provided for substantial help, but we get twice as much help under the new agreement that the Federal Government have entered into. I do not know what the Federal Commission can do. The members of the Commission will probably see the Minister, who will tell them what it is proposed to do. I suppose he will do what he intends. As the Minister indicated, we are getting enough money to cover the losses we are likely to be faced with. The fact remains that the work of development in the South-West is now being taken at the risk of other Governments to a considerable extent. I hope the work of the Federal Commission will prove helpful, but I am always doubtful about commissions. The Minister must fix the policy and carry out the scheme according to his own methods. No one could object to that. That is a responsibility, and an opportunity for the Government. The Minister supported the introduction of this method of settling the people on the land for the same reason that I did, and I have

set forth that reason at considerable length this evening. Farming is the thing we want, and production from the farms as well. Down in the South-West we have men from the goldfields, wharf lumpers and others from every part of the State, and from the Old Country. It is all a question of management and I am sure, in common with the Minister, that the men will be successful. I doubt if it is wise to give the men 45 acres cleared straight away.

The Minister for Lands: That would be over about four years.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I believe that 25 acres, if worked, will keep them very well indeed.

The Minister for Lands: The expert says "no"; I do not know.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Of course the men would go on clearing other portions of their holdings, for which they would be paid as they were in the wheat belt. If I may say so without offending the Minister, what the settlers want are pigs and cows. In my opinion the pigs will bring in more money than the cows, but the settlers cannot keep pigs without cows. They will also have to go in for growing mangels, lucerne, peas and probably some oats as well. They should have five sows and keep their young stock to the bacon stage. If they have them, and half a dozen cows as well, the settlers will be comfortably off. But of course they cannot have that stock without a plough. Many of the settlers have more than 25 acres cleared now, but, at any rate, I hope the Minister will see that they have pigs as well as cows. As a matter of fact, the South-West should produce all the bacon we want and also a considerable quantity for export. There is an unlimited market for pork in the Old Land. Britain imports £70,000,000 worth of pork each year. I do not think we need fear that we shall not secure a market for all we produce. I think we shall have markets for all the butter, bacon, wool, wheat and fruit and everything we are likely to produce in this State, long before we are at the export stage, after providing for our own requirements. I know the Minister is keen on migration. I have pointed out time and again, although my words have always been combated by members opposite, that we have far more people in the State than 374,000. Year after year we bring out people and yet a greater number seem to go away than are brought

in. The departures always seem to exceed the arrivals.

The Minister for Lands: That has been stopped. The population is increasing splendidly now.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It has not been stopped. The position is the same now as it always has been. Then again, children are born year by year. In the last six months the excess of arrivals over departures has been 1,486 but the nominated and assisted migrants alone have numbered 1,803. For last year the assisted and nominated migrants alone numbered 4,011, and yet the excess of arrivals over departures was only 3,189. That is ridiculous. The people are here. The fact is that every quarter, 220 are taken off the number of people supposed to be in Western Australia and then when a census is taken they decide that we shall have 10,000 fewer people than we are supposed to have.

Mr. Griffiths: Is that how they get at it?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes. The Federal people take off a number at the rate of, say, a thousand a year, and thus at the end of a ten-year period we lose 10,000 people. We are supposed to receive 25s. per head for all the people in the State, but, of course, the authorities will not deprive us of that money. The people are here. It would be impossible to get a correct census in this State. Members opposite, especially when election time came round, always accused me—and they were supported in their accusations by their official newspaper—of having brought people out at great expense, and yet those people were not staying in the State. The same thing is going on now; the figures I have quoted are official. I suppose these people walked out of the State! Certainly they did not pay their fares.

Mr. Panton: We will have to erect a barbed-wire fence to keep them in.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: There is no need to erect a barbed-wire fence to keep Victorians in Western Australia.

The Minister for Lands: It is only necessary to go through the country areas and see the development that is taking place, to get proof of that.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Of course, that is so. When it was said that the newcomers were leaving the State, I pointed to the order for a thousand houses. Those buildings were put up in the country districts, and thousands more. The Minister

informed us to-night of the number that had been erected in the group settlement areas alone. In each of those houses there is probably a wife and a number of children.

The Minister for Lands: The population in the group houses alone is nearly 10,000.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: And there are thousands of other people who are in those districts merely because the groups have been established. I suppose there are quite 15,000 people there who did not live in those parts before. We have erected houses for the people, and others are settling down and getting married as well. Yet there are people who say that we are not keeping the population, and that more leave than come in! Irrespective of the assisted and nominated migrants, there are many people who pay their own way when they come out to the West. Of course these people are here. When it comes to taking off 880 from our population in an arbitrary fashion each year, hon. members can easily understand the position.

Mr. North: Is there a fixed period for each census?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes. The Federal authorities take off 880 each year to make sure we do not get more than we should, and when a census is taken they take off another 10,000.

Mr. North: It is a shame.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not blame the Government. I say the people are here, and we should be drawing our per capita payments for them. The present Minister for Lands adopted the policy of the previous Government and is endeavouring to carry it out. There is no doubt about that. He has made some changes, of course, with which I do not altogether agree, but that is his duty and his responsibility; he has to do what he believes is right. There is no one else on the Government side of the House that could do the work so well. When the Wilson Government went out in 1911, land settlement had come to the top. With the present Minister, land settlement has gone on. The work is proceeding much as it did before he took office. I do not say it is going on quite as well as if he had not gone there at all, but he is endeavouring to carry out the same policy with some changes. No one on his side of the House could do it anything like as well as he is doing it. If I have any criticism to offer this evening regarding this, the most important work of government, I should say it is that the higher

officers particularly employed in the departments that the Minister controls have not been advanced in salary to the extent their work deserves.

The Minister for Lands: I agree with you, and told the Public Service Commissioner so regarding some of the officers.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Of course, we have no control over the salary items, for they are fixed for us by the Public Service Commissioner, and by the Public Service Appeal Board.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Why should it not be so? What is wrong with it?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: What is wrong with the hon. member?

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Why should not the salaries of officers be fixed by the board?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I say they are fixed that way. We appointed the board?

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I thought you were complaining.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: You knew very well I was not complaining! I said that the Government had no say in fixing salaries.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That is the point. It is undesirable that Parliament should have that power.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It is the responsibility of the commissioner and the appeal board and we appointed the appeal board.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Then why complain?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I was not complaining at all. I do not think Parliament should fix salaries.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Then you had no reason for making the remarks that you did just now.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I propose to make any remarks that the Chairman permits me to make and I shall certainly not ask the member for Guildford what I shall say. If he had been in his seat instead of somewhere else, he would have heard me say that I consider the salaries paid to the higher officials of these important departments have not been adequately increased and their responsibilities have not been properly recognised in the salaries fixed. I shall not bother the member for Guildford further; he will have an opportunity to discuss the salaries if he pleases. It is our right to discuss them, but we cannot alter them. I congratulate the Minister for Lands on his statement about land selec-

tion. I agree with him that we shall not be likely to have enough land again to satisfy the people seeking it. If we had 10,000 blocks of first-class wheat land we should readily get 10,000 people from the Eastern States to take them at our policy price. I do not think we shall ever again satisfy the demand for land and I sincerely hope we shall not. We want to see this country settled.

MR. LINDSAY (Footyay) [9.2]: I was interested in the speech of the Minister for Lands, particularly in his reference to the large area of land still to be selected for wheat growing. In speaking on this question the other evening I remarked that I thought we had made mistakes in our policy of land settlement, inasmuch as we had permitted the land to be selected in holdings that were too large.

The Minister for Lands: I agree with you.

Mr. LINDSAY: I would advise the Minister to be consistent. The Minister within the last few years has stated from his place in the House that we should amend the Land Act to permit of a man taking up 15,000 acres.

The Minister for Lands: That was sandplain country.

Mr. LINDSAY: Yes. In reply to that I said that such an amendment would not be carried while I could stand on my feet and oppose it. I have before me a paragraph recording a statement by the Minister that he considered the land in the Bullfinch area might be given away in 2,000-acre blocks. That was first-class land. With that statement I wish to deal to-night. The Minister, like the rest of us who are growing old, is learning and he has certainly learnt a lot about light land in the last two years. One must congratulate him on having an open mind on that question. Two years ago we were told that we had nine million acres of light land within 12 miles of existing railways, the value of which land we did not recognise. We know that many hundreds of thousands of acres of that land have since been selected. We have been told that a great many losses have been made on light land in this State, but when we come to analyse the position we must agree that only within the last three or four years has there been any value placed even upon the first-class land in the wheat belt. Some few years ago we could buy first-class farms—I did so as a member of a repatriation com-

mittee—for a great deal less than the value of the improvements upon them. Owing to the fact that we have proved the quality of the land, that there is not a big area of wheat land to be selected from the Crown, and that people from the other States want our land, it to-day has a value. As I indicated a little while ago when the Minister was speaking, we are continually learning more and more about the quality of our land. To-day we know a great deal more about light land than we knew two years ago. Some of our light land is not as good as we should like it to be. I shall not deal with the South-West or with the North where there are sandy areas near the coast, but our light land would be considered by other States of much greater value than we regard it even to-day. I dealt the other day with my visit to the Eastern States where I inquired particularly into the use of light land. It would be a good thing for Western Australia if the Minister for Lands sent some of the trustees of the Agricultural Bank to the northern parts of South Australia and Victoria, so that they might see what is being done and what is considered good land there, and compare it with the land in this State on which they are not prepared to advance Agricultural Bank funds. I travelled some hundreds of miles through practically sandy mallee country, not one bit better than a million acres of our light land, and there the farmers consider that the area of a holding should be increased to 800 acres and no more. Recently a report was tabled in this House from which I have taken some figures. There are 934,130 acres to be served by a new railway, and the report stated that that area would provide holdings for 400 settlers. That is equal to an average of 2,335 acres per settler. The proportion of land in that area that will not be selected—salt lakes and wodgil country—will not be five per cent. Yet we are going to give settlers areas averaging more than 2,300 acres. One of our great difficulties has been that we had too few people on the areas we have already settled, and the position is getting even worse than it was a few years ago. Owing to the increased value of land and the manner in which its productive capabilities have been proved, everyone who goes on the land to-day wants to grab as much as he can get. In my travels I have found that although under the Land Act a man is permitted to select only a certain area, and in the matter of the name in which it is held does not

select more, there are many who actually hold 10,000 to 20,000 acres. I believe in a man having a fair area provided he works it, but when dealing with original land settlement, the country should be cut up into blocks that will give settlers a living area. When we say that a man should hold 2,000 acres of first-class land, as the Minister has said, and when we say he should hold 5,000 acres of third-class land—

The Minister for Lands: What is the good of the first-class land if it has not the rainfall?

Mr. LINDSAY: I am speaking of the Bullfinch country, and I believe that it will prove to be a successful wheat growing area.

Mr. Davy: You would not care how much land a man held provided he worked it efficiently?

Mr. LINDSAY: That is not the point. To get development as fast as possible we want as many settlers as we can get on areas of a reasonable size. Mr. Gregory accompanied me through my district not long ago, and I told him my ideas of the area required by a settler. He could not agree with me. In travelling through the district he asked me why this and that land had not been selected. I replied that it had all been selected 10 or 15 years ago. Then he asked why it was not being worked. In my experience it takes an average settler from 15 to 20 years to improve 1,000 acres, and it would take him much longer to improve 2,000 acres. The development of the country has been retarded through settlers selecting unnecessarily large areas. There are men who select land and are not successful settlers, and there are some men who prove more successful and progressive than others. When the successful men get on their feet they will buy out the other men, and so make room for their relatives. I have brought this matter up because the Minister spoke of a Closer Settlement Bill. The actions of various Governments in this State have brought about a condition of affairs that will have to be dealt with in the near future.

Mr. Davy: Is not the remedy a stringent enforcement of improvement conditions?

Mr. LINDSAY: Yes, to a certain extent, but the question involved is "What is a living area?" I have studied the schemes of land settlement in other parts of the world. I have information about the early days of settlement in America. In Victoria, land was selected in blocks of 640 acres. In the Northern Valley the maximum area is now

800 acres. Yet we allow people to select blocks of 5,000 acres of good, solid sand-plain country, which the Minister knows is profitable wheat growing land. When a settler without capital goes on to such a block what an immense sum he has to raise in order to develop that area and what a number of years it will be before he can develop it. His action in taking up such an area retards the district and the State. The fact that he has to pay rates and taxes on an unnecessarily large area means that he is being deprived of money that he should be putting into the development of a block of reasonable size.

Mr. Davy: If you had strict improvement conditions that would overcome the whole of the difficulty.

Mr. LINDSAY: We have those conditions to a certain extent to-day.

Mr. Davy: Are they too easy?

Mr. LINDSAY: My point is that the Railway Advisory Board mentioned that 934,000 acres would provide holdings for 400 settlers. I know that land and I know that several 20,000-acre blocks have been taken up. I doubt whether 400 settlers will be provided with land there. Yet there is sufficient land to give living areas to 800 settlers, and it would be better if the land laws insisted upon the 800 settlers being placed there. At present there is a big demand for land in this State, but the granting of those big areas means it will take twice as long to develop that country as it would if we placed double the number of settlers on it. This question is a far-reaching one. Our wheat yields are low and the reason for it lies in the methods of cultivation. Generally speaking, even a progressive man acquires too much land and finds he has not the plant or the capital to develop it properly. Consequently our methods of farming are bad. A small area farmed well is better than twice the area farmed as it is usually farmed in this State. I have an extract from a book by Sir Horace Plunkett, on rural life in America, dealing with the farmers in the Middle West, the wheat country of the United States, when the land was first settled. He says—

They took up more land than they could handle; they borrowed money to carry out improvements and in order to pay their interest and instalments of purchase, they invented a system of farming unprecedented in its wastefulness. They treated the farm as a mine or as a bank where the depositors are always taking out more than they put in.

The same thing is occurring in Western Australia to-day. The Agricultural Bank trustees

are the greatest offenders in forcing people to take up unnecessarily large areas of land. The Minister has told us repeatedly that the Agricultural Bank trustees will make advances on light land. That is not my experience. Probably I have had as many dealings of this kind as has any other member. Although the Agricultural Bank trustees will advance in certain districts and at certain distances from a railway, they will not do so unless the applicant has a large area. Two cases came within my knowledge recently. One was an area of 1,160 acres, which I know is good second-class land. I was told that the area was not sufficient on which to make a living and the bank would not advance on it. On another area of 1,860 acres the trustees are not advancing, and again they said it was not large enough. The question is, "What area do they consider large enough?" The amount of capital required to clear and fence that land and provide a water supply, stock and implements for it would be £8,000 to £10,000.

The Minister for Lands: I can only tell you what the bank trustees tell me.

Mr. LINDSAY: Well, they told me differently. The Agricultural Bank Act was amended to allow of further assistance being given in this direction. It has been stated publicly that the assistance was for this purpose. In order that a man might have 600 acres of land cleared, 300 acres under fallow and 300 under crop, it would practically mean that he would have to take up 2,500 acres. If it is right that 300 acres under crop represents a living area, the bank should be prepared to advance on a block of 1,000 acres. I would not allow any man to select more first class land than that.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You do not suggest that would be sufficient in the case of light lands?

Mr. LINDSAY: No. In some of the yellow sandy country it would not be enough.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You must have the rotation crops upon it.

Mr. LINDSAY: In the case of the great bulk of the light lands I know of in the wheat belt 1,000 acres would be sufficient.

Mr. Latham: I would not like to try it.

Mr. LINDSAY: Men in my district have less than 1,000 acres.

The Minister for Lands: There is very little light land available in your district.

Mr. LINDSAY: No. We know the value of it.

Mr. Davy: Are you not prepared to allow a settler who goes out into the back-blocks a chance of making a little more than a living?

Mr. LINDSAY: I did not say a little more than a living? I referred to a living area. If a man farms well he has a better living than he could get in the city. I am not making a financial statement, but I could give the details of the scheme I drew up some years ago. The other night I dealt with the subject of efficient agriculture. I have here a bulletin issued by Professor Perkins of South Australia. He was dealing with the area of farms. He said that owing to the increase in the cost of production it was necessary to have a bigger farm and have greater sized machinery in use to-day. His idea of a small farm is 200 acres under crop, and of a big farm 300 acres under crop. We thus come back to my original remark on the subject. He also deals with the increased efficiency of farmers on Yorke's Peninsula. He says that the average acreage for those engaged in that part of the State in primary production has increased from 77 to 147 acres. He is limiting himself to something that is the usual limit in the other States.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That would not produce a sufficient crop to give a man a living.

Mr. LINDSAY: I have told members that he suggested increasing the area from 200 acres to something like 300 acres under crop.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That will not give a man a living.

Mr. LINDSAY: I do not say so. These farmers would carry sheep and farm on the rotation system.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That area would not carry sheep.

Mr. LINDSAY: I do not say the farm in the mind of the Professor is limited to 300 acres. He is talking about the crop every year and is alluding to the proper method of farming on the rotation basis. He is probably referring to a total area of about 900 acres. It would be advisable if the trustees of the bank were to go to the Eastern States to inquire into methods of farming there, the areas of land, and the quality of the land.

The Minister for Lands: The manager was there the other day.

Mr. LINDSAY: They might then see if they could introduce some Eastern States ideas into this State.

Mr. Latham: Mr. Grogan lived in the Eastern States for many years.

Mr. LINDSAY: Some settlers in an outlying portion of my electorate said they were refused an advance by the Agricultural Bank, and ask me to approach the trustees with a view to getting an advance. I do not know what area they hold or the quality of their land. I wrote to the trustees yesterday but have not yet received a reply. Many grievances have been placed before me, but when I have inquired into them I have generally found that the trustees have been most liberal in the treatment meted out to their clients. When we pick up thousands of men from the highways and byways and put them on the land we must expect some failures. They are not always as fair to the Government or the trustees as they might be. The Minister put forward certain figures dealing with group settlement and referred to a drought in the South-West last year. In that part of the State the summers are usually dry. In the report of the Royal Commission the rainfall in various selected areas is set out. In the case of Busselton, where records have been kept for 43 years, during five months of the summer the rainfall averaged 64 points per month. It is not to be expected that crops will grow in the summer on such a light rainfall. If success is to be achieved in those districts it must be obtained by conserving fodder in silos.

Mr. Latham: What is it at Pemberton and further south?

Mr. LINDSAY: The report of the Commission says—

The dry summer of the South-West is responsible for the fact that in all but the very moist soils the peak periods of production of the annual and perennial constituents of the pastures fall within a few weeks of each other. The animals are in their prime in October and November, and the perennials between this and January. The farmer will thus find himself with an abundance of feed during the spring and early summer months, but with a shortage during late summer and winter.

Very few members have read this report, but they have freely criticised the members of the Commission. In face of this statement, the Minister's remarks are surprising. I am responsible for the figures contained in the report. I have been accused of inflating them, according to the minority report signed by the member for York, but my figures have not approached those given by the Minister to-night.

Hon. G. Taylor: You were very optimistic.

Mr. LINDSAY: Some members thought I was pessimistic. We went a good deal further than the Minister went. We felt that for a settler to get anything like a living he must have 20 cows in milk. For that purpose we estimated it was necessary to carry 31 cows on the farm. We further estimated one cow to three acres, and two horses, making a total acreage of 99 acres. When I made up the figures connected with the development of 99 acres, I made the average cost to the settler £3,064 9s. 6d. I was told I was very pessimistic. The minority report on this subject says—

I do not agree with the financial statements which purport to set out the average cost of holdings at groups 3, 4, and 7, as at the time of disbandment, and which carry the estimated costs on to 30th June, 1927. I cannot endorse the method adopted in framing the estimates, for in my opinion the figures have been unduly inflated.

My figure comprised 99 acres, partly under pasture and intense culture, to carry 31 cows altogether. The Minister stated—

It was the intention to clear 45 acres of heavy timber country at an estimated cost of £2,800.

The Minister for Lands: I did not say anything of the kind.

Mr. Latham: It was £1,800.

Mr. LINDSAY: What did the Minister say?

The Minister for Lands: I said it was expected that some of the land would be cleared by the settlers themselves. I refer to the amount that the Government might advance by way of a maximum.

Mr. LINDSAY: That would be £2,000 in the case of light land.

The Minister for Lands: And £1,000 in the other case.

Mr. LINDSAY: Then the sum of £1,800 would include fencing, clearing, stock, etc. The Minister gives the sum of £1,800 in which expenditure the settler would be expected to do some of the work himself. In other words the Minister was not allowing for the 45 acres cleared by the Government, but was allowing 45 acres less one-fifth.

The Minister for Lands: That is correct.

Mr. LINDSAY: Having been criticised over these figures I was surprised to hear the Minister's figures. Up to the present no block of 45 acres has been cleared for £1,800. We were dealing with the groups as they were then.

The Minister for Lands: Some have been cleared for less.

Mr. LINDSAY: When I gave my figures the average cost of clearing, fencing, water supply, pasture, house, 25 acres of clearing, etc., was £1,568. I allowed £7 per acre on my figures for clearing. These were figures given by the department. The remainder of the land was to be cleared on piece work. I do not believe it possible for these men to make a living out of 10 cows. No one could expect more than £14 a year from a cow, though I believe when calves and pigs are included it has been built up to £18.

The Minister for Lands: Your figures are contrary to the actual tests that have been made.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: A return of £14 would be extraordinary.

Mr. LINDSAY: If the side lines are included it could be built up to £18.

The Minister for Lands: Not cows only; other things as well.

Mr. LINDSAY: Calves and pigs as well. The member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith) said the figures were altogether too high. He suggested 10s. per month. The Minister contended that investigations made on the Peel Estate had reduced the figures from 30s. per month to £1, or perhaps he said 25s. I think the Minister's second thoughts represent something near the revenue required. I have brought the matter up because of the return which the Minister himself laid on the Table, showing the number of cows per settler. After five years' development, on the 21st May, 1921, there are on Group 5 23 settlers with 77 cows, and on Group 6 15 settlers with 71 cows. That shows an average of a little over four cows per settler after five years' development. That average is low. The members of the Royal Commission on Group Settlement were taken down to that district specially to see a fine growth of cocksfoot on Group 4. This was before we concluded our report. I was surprised to find those results.

The Minister for Lands: That year was the worst year the Busselton district had.

Mr. LINDSAY: In view of the rainfall conditions in the Busselton district it cannot be expected that grass will remain green there during the summer months. The Royal Commission's report did not condemn the Abba River settlement, but said that the Abba River lands should not have been used for group settlement. Now, the Abba River lands are the lands which the Minister particularly mentioned. In that area it is not altogether a question of rainfall; the

trouble is that the soil will not retain moisture. The only hope of saving that area as regards summer dairying lies in silos. There is no real summer land in the area, except in the gullies of the forest country. In the flat district around Busselton it is not possible to grow summer crops, and the cattle can only be fed by means of silos. My remarks will be on record in the years to come, which will prove the correctness of my contention as to number of settlers and area of land. What has been the experience of every country in the world will be our experience. My view of land settlement is to follow the course that is taught us by the experience of other countries. If we had paid regard to that experience we should have a great many more settlers on the area of land served by the existing railway system, and we should also have a much larger production than we have to-day. The larger production will come, but much more slowly than would otherwise have been the case. In my district, which has been settled for 20 years, not one farm has all its land improved; and many of the farms consist of less than 1,000 acres. The average man whom we put on the land is not able during his lifetime to improve more than 1,000 acres.

Mr. Latham: Do you say the average man cannot improve more than 1,000 acres?

Mr. LINDSAY: From practical experience I say that the average man does not improve more than 1,000 acres in 20 years.

Mr. Latham: Thank Heaven, that is not the average in our district!

Mr. LINDSAY: In my district there is a farm of 660 acres on which 220 acres have been improved, and another farm of 500 acres on which, up to six months ago, 270 acres had been improved. I have since bought the rest of the land in the second farm.

Mr. Davy: Do not you know one man who has cleared and improved 1,000 acres?

Mr. LINDSAY: I am speaking of the average man. I dare say there are men who have improved more than 1,000 acres. I know of one man who has improved thousands of acres himself, and his trouble is the same as that of many Western Australian farmers. When asked by a neighbour why his crop was put in so badly, he replied, "I had such a bad crop because I have such a large area."

Mr. Davy: It is only a matter of capital. One man by himself cannot do very much.

Mr. LINDSAY: That is just the point. Properly to improve 1,000 acres of forest country in this State costs £4,000, and then the land requires £2,000 or £3,000 worth of machinery and stock. The owner cannot borrow more than £2,000 from the bank on it, and he has to get his profit out of the soil. The period of development here must necessarily be extended because our farmers generally have areas that are too large. Recently I heard one farmer say to another, "I have a lot of self-sown crop." The second farmer said, "Self-sown crops don't pay." The first farmer rejoined, "I have so much land cleared and I had such a lot to sow that I did not get it all furrowed." The member for West Perth (Mr. Davy) knows the man I am speaking of.

Mr. Latham: Either he has not much stock, or he is not much of a farmer.

Mr. LINDSAY: In the interests of the State it would be much better if we had a greater number of settlers on the areas. That would also be much better for the settlers themselves, and the average yield per acre would be much higher than it is to-day. These are my reasons for having brought the matter before the Chamber. In the years to come this will become a burning question, and the Minister for Lands, if still in office, will be trying to get Closer Settlement Bills passed, not only to deal with the large estates existing now, but also to deal with the large estates which are being and will be created. As the years go by, the question will become more serious.

MR. LATHAM (York) [9.38]: I congratulate the Minister for Lands on his very able speech in introducing the departmental Estimates. The Government may well be proud of possessing a member who knows so much about land settlement. A certain amount of credit is also due to the Leader of the Opposition for having taken into his confidence the present Minister for Lands, then Deputy Leader of the Opposition, at the time the land settlement scheme was initiated. Indeed, everybody should be proud of what has been accomplished in so short a time. The results of the work are wonderful. I have got out some figures showing the wheat production of the State during the last 15 years. They are astounding. In 1910, with a record average yield per acre which still holds good, 12.48 bushels per acre, the State's

production of wheat was 5,600,000 bushels. In 1925, 15 years later, on a far smaller average yield per acre, the State produced 23,887,000 bushels of wheat. Such progress in the space of 15 years is absolutely wonderful. All we have to do is to continue that selfsame progress for another 15 years and the State will more than hold its own with any other wheat-growing country. The Minister has produced to the Chamber a map showing 38 million acres of good land only awaiting transport facilities to become available for settlement. We can do nothing at all to help him in that respect. He must look to his own Treasurer for assistance. If the Treasurer asks for authority to borrow money for railway purposes—

The Minister for Lands: He cannot do it at present.

Mr. LATHAM: If he does, there will not be one voice raised in opposition on this side of the Chamber.

The Minister for Lands: The Treasurer cannot do it until the railways already authorised have been constructed.

Mr. LATHAM: I know that. Many railways are needed for areas which have been settled for a number of years, especially Kalgarin. It is a crying shame to keep settlers so long without a railway. I did hope that the present Government would have seen fit to build that line before completing the railway from Dwarda to Narrogin. The former line is the more necessary. I know there was an old promise which had to be fulfilled as regards the Dwarda-Narrogin project; but, still, it would have been better if the other line had been constructed.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Why did not your Government build that other line? They built neither line.

Mr. LATHAM: The reason was that in those times money was extremely difficult to obtain.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: But your Government did not build either line.

Mr. LATHAM: No one knows better than the hon. member that the Mitchell Government did as much as ever it was possible to do. Men had to be taken off other works to build a line for settlers who were carting wheat 23 miles to a siding. Carting wheat, moreover, is much more difficult than carting wool, the special product of the district which did get a line. Let me repeat that on a question of

building more railways there will be no opposition from this side of the Chamber.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: You have just been opposing one railway.

Mr. LATHAM: I am speaking of the area shown in yellow on the map produced by the Minister for Lands. If the member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. E. B. Johnston) wants me to proceed with the other subject, let me tell him that not one farmer in the area now served by the Dwarda-Narrogin line was situated more than 16 miles from a railway.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: You are quite wrong.

Mr. LATHAM: No. Settlers who have to cart 20 and 30 and 40 miles would be quite satisfied if they could get within 16 miles of a siding. Certainly people who have to cart wheat long distances should be given railway facilities first. I agree with the Minister for Lands that country should not be thrown open until there is an assurance of railway communication for it. I know of settlers situated 54 miles from a railway who, for several years, produced wheat which was bringing 3s. 4d. per bushel. Of course that was an impossible proposition, and we do not want to see such a state of things repeated. Those adverse conditions take the heart out of the best settler.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That was the early weakness of wheat belt settlement and caused the Industries Assistance Board.

Mr. LATHAM: Even to-day nearly all those settlers are on their land, and moreover are fairly comfortable financially. I am not questioning that the Government of that day did what was best. The explanation is that settlement went too far ahead of railway construction.

The Minister for Railways: That is not confined to one district.

Mr. LATHAM: I agree with the Minister for Railways. It is a good investment to build lines and proceed with the settlement of our lands. In looking at the map produced by the Minister for Lands I am greatly struck with the large area available in the southern part of the State, the area running from Albany eastward.

The Minister for Lands: That is only sheep country.

Mr. LATHAM: Just east of Albany, perhaps, but when you get towards Esperance it is of better quality. I feel sure that area

is going to produce millions of bushels of wheat. All we have to do is to go steadily until we can provide the money for the railways. We cannot afford to place settlers on small areas of light land. The best settlers we can get from such land are the sons of farmers, and farmers themselves who have already developed small areas of land.

The Minister for Lands: And some of the South Australians.

Mr. LATHAM: I do not think they are likely to take up much of that land. One settler from Yorke's Peninsula when over here looking for land told me the time they liked to get in was when some work had been done. I have never struck either a South Australian or a Victoria who has gone out into our virgin country for land. A little while ago I saw a man looking for 20,000 acres for himself and family, but in the end he came back on to a railway and paid £8 per acre. Wheat can be grown on light country, but not year in and year out.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That is where the member for Toodyay was out in his calculations.

Mr. LATHAM: Yes. We have seen that demonstrated. It may be all right for two or three years, but it must then have a spell. Moreover, sheep are required for that country, and it must be fed off, not burned off. In my opinion about 5,000 acres of it is required.

The Minister for Lands: When I referred to acreage, I had in mind some areas of sand-plain, of which 20,000 acres would be required.

Mr. LATHAM: Of course, one cannot get 5,000 acres of light land all good in one area. Our sand-plain is not nearly so bad as some people believe. Where such land has been cultivated with other land for a few years, one cannot find the original line of demarcation between it and the better country. However, we cannot successfully put new settlers on to that light land, for it requires experienced men. We have wonderfully good advisers in the Agricultural Bank, and I hope we shall always have before us the advice tendered by the trustees of the bank. I can quite understand why the surveys are not going on more quickly. The difficulty, of course, is railway construction. I want to congratulate the Minister on the able way he has handled the netting question. The rabbits have not caused so much trouble this season, owing largely to the

splendid way in which the vermin boards and the settlers themselves have taken the matter in hand. But the Minister and his officers have done admirable work in getting out wire netting. When I see the miles of netting that has been erected this year I am proud to represent a district to which the Minister has given so much consideration. It has been the means, not only of reducing the damage by rabbits, but also of encouraging the settlers to go in for sheep, which will be worth a lot to the State generally. I am sorry there should be people who will insist upon picking out the weak spots in group settlement. I could wish the member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) were present. He quoted the poor summer rainfall in the group settlement areas, but in doing so he restricted his remarks to the Busselton district. The State has done a great deal for a lot of people who will persist in criticising the Government's efforts to utilise the Crown lands, of which we have so much. Let us just analyse some of the rainfall figures. In the Busselton area for 43 years November produced an average of 86 points, December 54 points, January 43 points, February 47 points and March 88 points. That is the driest part of the group settlement area. When we come to Denmark we find that in a period extending over 22 years November produced an average of 178 points, December 140 points, January 113 points, February 164 points and March 234 points. At Karridale, over a period of 30 years November produced an average of 147 points, December 121 points, January 94 points, February 106 points and March 152 points. In Manjimup over a period of 12 years November produced an average of 226 points, December 174 points, January 108 points, February 107 points and March 142 points. Such criticism as the hon. member indulged in is not fair to the State. I say never mind who inaugurated the scheme, or who are now carrying it on. It is not fair to the South-West to say it has not a rainfall suitable for dairying.

Mr. Teesdale: It is crying stinking fish.

Mr. LATHAM: Even if we do have dry periods down there, we have them everywhere else. Moreover, Western Australia does not have them so frequently nor so severely as do the other States. Even the finer dairying portions of New South Wales experience droughts in which the farmers have to destroy their cattle. Let us be fair

to our own country. We have a country to be proud of, and we ought to be proud of the endeavours being made to utilise the country. It is our duty to help the Minister and to do what we can to enable the settlers of the South-West to make good. In most instances they are men who came here without money. Our main idea has been to try to lift men from the bottom rung of the ladder and give them an opportunity to achieve success. There is a good market for the commodities being produced down there, and I feel sure that if the member for Sussex were here he would tell us of a marked increase in the butter supply in those districts. I hope the Minister will be entirely successful in his group settlement scheme, and that we shall have the advantage of getting a greater amount of cheap money than is in sight at present for the development of the South-West. As the Leader of the Opposition has so clearly put it, we have a great responsibility upon us; we have no right to hold that land without utilising it; we are under an obligation to people it and to people it with our own race.

Mr. Teesdale: That does not apply to the North as well, does it?

Mr. LATHAM: Yes, it applies to the North equally; but there is more difficulty to be confronted in the North. We cannot develop the whole of the State at once, and so where the surroundings are a little more congenial, as in the South-West, we should plant settlers and give them a start, after which, perhaps, we may find opportunity to interest ourselves in other parts of the State. Even if we gave no more financial assistance through the Agricultural Bank, the omission could not prevent the full development of our wheat belt. The Minister has informed us of people with capital coming here, and I believe that when we have developed the South-West a little more, we shall be able to leave it to look after itself while we turn our attention to the North-West, a country lacking only men and money. Unfortunately at present we are not in a position to supply either. The Opposition are not here to criticise the Government's attempts to do what is right for the State, even though the Government are not quite as capable of administering the affairs of the State as we ourselves would be. Not only group settlement, but all land settlement, has my blessing, and if I can help it along I shall be only too pleased to do so.

MR. GRIFFITHS (Avon) [9.58]: I want to remove from the minds of members on this side a misunderstanding. To-night the Minister said that some member on this side had approached Government officials and, when taxed with having made incorrect statements in this Chamber, had turned it aside by saying that he was not attacking the officials, but had merely said those things in order to nullify the growing popularity of the Government in the country districts. If any member on this side made such a statement, he has a very low conception of fair play as between man and man. The impression is abroad that I was the member referred to. I was not.

Mr. Marshall interjected.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: There is the blowly beginning again. The officials of the Industries Assistance Board and of the Agricultural Bank, like all other men, are liable to make mistakes, but there are many occasions on which a little pleading from the member, and some good advice from the Minister himself, has served to remove anomalies and correct injustice.

I want to bear this testimony because I suppose I have been as frequent as anyone in my representations to Ministers and officials in regard to men who have grievances or alleged grievances. I suppose also, because it is known that I am always anxious to help anybody, people take advantage of that and submit matters that can often be satisfactorily explained by a mere perusal of files or a simple representation. Many of these people sometimes suffer, not from injustices, but from extension to them of too much leniency. The figures that have been supplied by the Minister regarding the Agricultural Bank and the Industries Assistance Board convince me that the latter is one of the finest debt collecting agencies the Government has ever established. The report of the Under Secretary gives one an idea of what has been done in the way of surveying and classifying areas. One can almost gasp at the magnitude of the operations that have been carried out. For instance, we learn that the country north of Kalgoorlie and out to East Murchison has been stocked with no less than 30,000 breeding ewes, and that there has been a wonderful transformation from a scattered cattle run into a series of well improved and thoroughly equipped sheep stations. When one comes to think of that, and of the opening up of the country between the Trans line and the coast, the

group settlements, the subdivisions that have been completed between Salmon Gums and Dundas, the Crown lands subdivision and classification east of the Great Southern railway and the No. 1 rabbit fence, the big area north and east of Kalkalling, and the preliminary classification of Crown lands east of Lake Monger and northwards of Lake Rothsay, one cannot but be impressed by the importance of all the improvements that are taking place and the results that are likely to follow. With regard to wire netting, recently I had the opportunity of visiting North Baandee where I saw on farm after farm netting being erected. Although we have heard a good deal about the delay on the part of the Government in getting to work in this direction, there is no doubt about it that the netting has been well distributed in that part of the State and quickly erected. A good deal has been said about cur light lands. There is one phase that I would like to bring before the House. Recently hon. members had an opportunity of seeing a film showing that part of the country north of Waeel. That film was really an advertisement for traction engines. The man responsible for the cultivation of the area shown on the film wrote me a few pertinent notes recently which might be of interest to members to hear—

Whilst I am writing you I would like to point out also the handicap that the rise of 5s. per ton is going to be in the price of super. Although the use of super. to-day consumes many tons where a cwt. was used a few years back, the tendency is to increase the price at the expense of the farmers. When the consumption was small an agreement was made with certain merchants, some of whom were importing manures that in consideration of their dealing only in locally manufactured super., that distribution would be confined to them, and a bonus of 10s. per ton paid to them. They are bound to pay country agents 2s. per ton only as commission for getting orders, and various other rules have to be observed. Now most farmers make arrangements to pay cash for their super., and as we cannot grow crops without it, there is no need for anyone to chase us for orders. We could do without any intermediaries altogether, and the use of light land is compelling us to use 1 cwt. and even 1½ cwt. per acre. Personally I intend sowing 1½ cwt. on 8,000 acres, so that although I will pay cash, this bonus will cost me £250 or 7½d. per acre, and every man who crops an acre of land in this State is taxed by this bonus alone at roughly 6d. per acre or more.

I shall say no more than to congratulate the Minister as the member for York has done. The position is very satisfactory and we feel that we should endeavour to assist the Minister in every way we can. The question of

group settlement is something like the liquor question—it calls up a lot of controversy. There are members who pose as group settlement experts, but I confess I know very little about the matter.

MR. DAVY (West Perth) [10.6]: I do not see why a poor town dweller should not say a few humble words on this vote. After all, although the representatives of metropolitan constituencies cannot pose as having any practical knowledge of farming or of farming problems, or of the agricultural development problems of the State, we are just as keenly interested as are the farmers themselves. A lawyer or a doctor or a retail merchant or a labourer in town, is entirely dependent for his employment on the prosperity of the agricultural and pastoral and other industries of the State. Therefore we cannot fail to be deeply interested. I wish to make one or two brief remarks which have been prompted by the interesting speech of the member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay). I do not think he meant to create the impression, which I think he may have created, that it was desirable that the farming lands of Western Australia should be chopped up into little pieces and that only such small pieces should be given to each person as the average man could effectively develop.

Mr. Teesdale: He said it plainly, too.

Mr. DAVY: I do not think he could have meant that. The adoption of such a policy would be most disastrous. There are persons in Western Australia, whatever the member for Toodyay may say, who have successfully developed thousands of acres themselves, not of course with their own lands, but with their brains, initiative and capital, whether they had the capital or whether it was borrowed. I can think of one man, probably the most outstanding of that type of person in Western Australia, who started at advanced middle age in the year 1913 or 1914 without a shilling to his name and took up land on the Wongan Hills line. He there crops yearly at the present time between 5,000 and 6,000 acres. Two or three years ago he took off 25,000 bags of wheat. Recently the same man acquired another large property between the Wongan Hills line and the Midland line and he started on it about last September. It is virgin country. This year he has cropped 2,000 acres.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: He had money when he started.

Mr. DAVY: He had not anything when he started. I think I can satisfy the hon. member afterwards that he had nothing at all.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I happen to know something about it.

Mr. DAVY: Well, we can discuss it afterwards. I have stated it to be a fact, because of a particularly intimate relationship with the individual.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: There is no man in this country whom I admire more, but all the same there were special circumstances.

Mr. DAVY: Perhaps so, but nevertheless I have quoted that case as an instance of the type of person whose services might be lost if the view of the member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) were taken seriously, and were acted upon. The result would be to cramp the energy and enterprise of men; it would delay development and affect the prosperity of the State enormously. Early in the history of land development in Western Australia it was laid down that a man could take up only 2,000 acres of C.P. first class land. Whether or not it was because it was realised that to allow a person to have more would be inimical to the best interests of the State, I do not know. In practice, however, that rule has been openly and completely ignored at the Lands Office. If a man has already more than his quota of land, and desires to acquire more, there is never the slightest attempt to conceal the fact, and he takes it up in the name of his wife, sister or cousin. It is done openly; why, I do not know. But I do think that if the law definitely lays down one thing, and the opposite is done openly and without question, it cannot be good for the State. It might be just and proper that we should say that any person who takes up Crown land on the very favourable terms offered under the Land Act, that person should strictly comply with the improvement conditions. That is the way to prevent the danger which the member for Toodyay fears. From what I have heard it is undoubted that a great number of persons in this State have impoverished themselves by insisting on holding larger areas of land than they have been able to develop. In that respect they have been their own enemies. But the remedy for that to my mind is, not to pass laws saying that they shall not hold more than a certain area of land, but to say that no man shall acquire C.P. land unless he carries out rigidly the

improvements that may be determined upon. There should be no getting away from that. If the improvement conditions are not sufficiently stringent to prevent a man holding wastefully too much land, those conditions should be tightened up. That seems to me to be the correct way to deal with the situation, not by the method that the member for Toodyay inferred rather than definitely stated.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford) [10.13]: I desire to express my appreciation of the explanation, though somewhat limited, of the Minister for Lands in regard to the activities of the department he administers. Everyone who has taken an interest in the State during the past 12 months has been particularly struck with the enormous amount of attention that our agricultural lands have received not only from our own people but from people in the Eastern States. I think we all receive inquiries. Only to-day I got two letters from Eastern Australia asking me to supply particulars in regard to our lands. We are receiving communications of that description regularly. Any hon. member interested in land development in Western Australia, who has been in touch with the Eastern States in recent times, receives so many inquiries as to indicate that our areas are increasing in popularity with the people of the Eastern States. That is due to the fact that our land values are low as compared with their productive capacity, and compared with the Eastern States our lands are a better asset or a better investment than similar land in other parts of Australia. In our enthusiasm regarding recent developments we must not be carried away into assuming that our past methods regarding land settlement and development have not been sound. I do not agree with the member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) in his contention that the areas that can be taken up under the Land Act are too great. The Land Act of to-day has been in operation for a long time and the area that can be selected by an individual under that Act is the minimum area that should be available for selection.

Mr. Latham: Hear, hear!

HON. W. D. JOHNSON: That provision is a tribute to the early administrators of the Lands Department who framed the parent Act. It was not done during my time in Parliament. Perhaps my experience goes

back as far as that of any other hon. member and if my memory serves me rightly, the Act was framed during the time of Mr. George Throssell, a man with a wonderful knowledge of Western Australia and extraordinary ability in estimating what was required from an agricultural point of view. The lands policy as we know it to-day was laid down by that hon. gentleman many years ago and successive Governments may have amended the Act, but they have never attempted to interfere with the area of land available for selection by an individual settler. It is true that the Land Act does not lay down conditions suitable for inducing people to take up and farm our light lands. I believe the time has arrived when we must go into that question. I have had experience of farming our light lands and it has shown me that the most difficult problems have been those associated with the light lands. Some hon. members contend that farmers have made a success of farms composed wholly of light lands. I say most emphatically that I have not seen them. All my losses and difficulties have been associated with the light lands that I possess. As the member for York (Mr. Latham) pointed out, after we had suffered great losses regarding the methods adopted in farming the light land, we learnt the right way in which that task should be undertaken. The work cannot be accomplished on a small area. If we adopted the views of the member for Toodyay and provided the area he suggested, we could not crop the land every second year.

Hon. G. Taylor: The land would not stand it.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON: No. The light lands will never stand it. I believe the member for Toodyay was present in the corridor when a number of men experienced in agricultural development were discussing this phase. Mention was made of the large quantities of "take-all" in the crops this year. It was generally conceded by those who had had experience, that the presence of that weed was due to overtaxing the strength of the land. If we start to crop the light land every second year we shall encourage the production of diseases and pests. The only way to overcome the difficulty is to change the crop rotation or do what the member for York proposed, namely, to put stock on the land to build it up. So far as I can determine, the correct way, judging from my own studies and from my observation of the methods adopted by other people, is to crop

it during the first year. Possibly, if there is a good season with the conditions generally favourable, and presuming a sufficient dressing of super has been provided, a farmer may get a 12-bushel crop. During the succeeding year, if exactly the same methods were adopted, probably not more than eight bushels of wheat to the acre would be procured. No matter what may be done, the second crop will never be exactly the same as that of the preceding year. The solution is in changing the crop? Instead of burning off the stubble on the light land, as would be done on heavy land during the initial stages, sheep would be turned on to the property to tread the stubble down and gradually work it into the soil thus strengthening it again. Then oats would be put in, and probably repeated again. After that the land should lie under pasture for a couple of years so that the strength of the soil might be built up again. When we have to resort to those conditions hon. members must appreciate the fact that it cannot be done with small areas. If a farmer is limited to a small area he is forced to crop it in successive years. The result is to make a mess of the whole thing and the land will produce nothing but rubbish, including "take-all" and other diseases. While I do not agree with the Minister when he talks about holdings of 5,000 acres, I emphatically disagree with the member for Toodyay when he speaks about 1,000-acre holdings.

The Minister for Lands: I said that two years ago some people took considerably more than 5,000 acres.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The point is that if a man has to take 5,000 acres of land in order to make a living from it, then the capital cost of the undertaking will get him down.

The Minister for Lands: I was talking about sheep farming.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: It is extremely difficult to make definite statements regarding our light country. The country the member for Toodyay spoke of, which will be served by the Ejanging Northwards railway, is totally different from the light lands of the Midland districts. There is a lot of light land between Merredin and Bruce Rock. It has been available for selection for the last 15 or 16 years but we do not touch it at all. We advise all our friends to leave it alone, because that land will not produce sufficient to recoup a settler for the capital outlay essential to get any crop at

all. In other words, that land represents an economic impossibility. On the other hand, there are huge areas of light country well worth development. But I say emphatically that that land cannot be developed on the basis of 1,000-acre holdings. I am not worrying about the opinion of the member for Toodyay, or about my own opinion. I take consolation from the knowledge that in Western Australia we had a very wise man who, during the early stages of land settlement, laid the foundations of our Land Act. I refer to the late Mr. George Throssell. Then again we had other wise men whose advice was available to direct us to the development of our land. We had Professor Lowrie, who did splendid work in educating the farmers in the utilising and development of our different country areas. Then Mr. Sutton came along. I desire to pay the highest tribute to that gentleman. He was remarkably cautious at the start. He would not make a declaration as to what was possible in this State. He said our lands were totally different from those of which he had had experience. At several meetings of farmers, I heard Mr. Sutton say that while he had opinions of his own he was not prepared to make any definite declaration until he had had experience in connection with our lands. He proceeded gradually. There is no doubt that some of us who have made some little success with our farming operations, are prepared to give the whole of the credit to Mr. Sutton and the education he provided for us regarding the methods to be employed in the development of our holdings. For my part, I certainly give that credit to Mr. Sutton. Indeed we have been very fortunate in the selection of officers who have this special qualification of caution, and also enthusiasm regarding the investigations they had to make to enable our settlers to succeed with their operations in the wheat belt. While that is so regarding our development and production in those areas, we also had the advantage of the establishment of our Agricultural Bank. We now have a thoroughly educated staff whose knowledge has been built up during the past 25 or 26 years. Thus, we have experts to whom we can well leave these problems. There is one thing about the present Minister that I have noticed particularly. Time after time he has made definite declarations regarding various questions, but when one attempts to cross-examine him he always turns back to the expert advisers, whose ser-

VICES are available in his department. Thus the Minister has in the Agricultural Bank trustees men who have had a very wide experience regarding our lands. The Managing Trustee, Mr. McLarty, is a man possessing special qualifications. He has devoted very many years to the task of advancing money with which to assist our settlers to till the soil and produce our wheat crops. He has acquired such knowledge that we can well leave it to his good judgment to decide upon the areas of the different types of land necessary to enable a settler to make a living. The safety valve we have in Western Australia is provided by the Agricultural Bank, and the wide experience and close application the trustees have had in estimating the productive capacity of our land. Their experience is such that they are not likely to mislead any Minister or any Government regarding the area necessary for an individual farmer to enable him to make a living. While that is so concerning our wheat lands, we are not in such a fortunate position regarding the South-West. While we have men of wide experience respecting land settlement in the wheat belt, both in the forest country and in the light areas, it cannot be said that we have equally qualified men to assist us regarding the South-West. As a member of the Group Settlement Royal Commission I was particularly struck by the limitations of the men administering that very difficult problem. It is a credit to the Minister that he, with the limited knowledge of the officers who have been advising him on group settlement, has not made more mistakes than have been made to date. As the Minister pointed out, the officers have had four or five years' experience of the group settlement problem and they can now arrive at definite conclusions as to what is possible. The Minister is submitting a new basis for the consideration of Cabinet. That new basis is largely on the lines of the report of the Group Settlement Commission. He has recognised, as his officers recognise, that, after all, the evidence that the Royal Commission on Group Settlement obtained was the evidence of men actually on the groups. Evidently the conclusions arrived at by the Commission are going to receive serious consideration. I wish to advise the Minister that it is very difficult to declare definitely what amount of money will be available for each particular block.

The Minister for Lands: The amounts I gave were only approximate.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The trouble is that the land varies in quality. In the wheat belt settlers have picked out the good areas and the lighter land has been left. It is the light land that is spoken of now as being worthy of settlement. There is a million acres within 12 miles of a railway, land that was passed over by people who took up the heavier forest country as not worth settling. That, however, has not been the practice in group settlement. The Government have taken a given area and have subdivided it into blocks. In that area may be found a number of particularly good dairy farms, but also quite a number of indifferent ones, and a few blocks that are absolutely bad. Therefore, to say that the Government will advance a given amount per block would be to do a great injustice to the men on the poorer blocks, who will have to employ different and more expensive methods to get the carrying capacity that the stronger and better soil will give. I want the Minister, in dealing with future groups, to exercise more care than has been exercised in the past in the selection of land suitable for group settlement. The Abba River land should never have been selected. Members were told that tens of thousands of acres of similar land had been surveyed, and possibly it, too, would have been settled had there not been a change of policy at a given stage in the development of group settlement. The Abba River area should never have been settled; it has been a sad experience.

Hon. G. Taylor: Some of it has been abandoned, has it not?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Some of it has been abandoned. The Minister is endeavouring to do something with the remaining portion, but it would be better to abandon a great deal of the bad country and make up our minds, as the member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) has said, that we shall never get a permanent pasture on the light land, because the coffee rock is so near to the surface that in summer it cannot retain the moisture to feed the pasture. Consequently, during the period when pasture is most needed, it is not available.

Hon. G. Taylor: It would be wise to cut the loss.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The Minister is endeavouring to overcome the difficulty and I hope he will be successful. It will be remembered that the Royal Commission were adversely criticised because of their

advice respecting that area, but it will now be appreciated that the members of the Commission did not err in their judgment.

Mr. Sampson: You did not err on the side of optimism.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Neither did we err on the side of pessimism. It was not a question of being optimistic or pessimistic; it was a matter of practical experience, of judging what we saw, what had been attempted and what had been achieved. It was a question of the economic possibility of making a success of that land. This is not the time for criticism, because land settlement and development are going ahead so well. Years ago the Lands Estimates were the most adversely criticised of all, simply because we were then struggling to establish ourselves.

Mr. Latham: People did not understand it.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: That is so, and members did not understand it. The farmers themselves did not understand it. To-day the position is different. The farmers have had experience: they know exactly how to tackle the land. They are getting wonderful production as compared with the years gone by, with the result that land values are increasing, financial institutions are more liberal in their advances, and the financial difficulties of the farmers are nothing like so great as they used to be. There is considerable prosperity from one end of the State to the other. Now that things are going so well and farmers are in such good heart and feel they have overcome the problems that faced them, I want the Minister to lend all the assistance he can, not so much to the work of production, but rather to the problem of marketing, which, after all, is our main problem to-day. If there is one thing I admire about the Prime Minister, Mr. Bruce,—and there is a good deal on which I disagree with him—it is that he has constantly been active ever since he became Prime Minister to overcome the very grave difficulties that we in Australia experience from the marketing point of view. In his speeches at the present Imperial Conference, and at the previous one, he constantly urged those who use our products to realise that there were better methods of obtaining them than prevailed at present. I believe that we in Western Australia are better organised as regards wheat marketing than is any other part of

Australia, but the disorganisation in Eastern Australia is having a detrimental effect upon the marketing methods of this State. If we could only get the whole of Australia up to the standard of our marketing organisation, particularly for wheat, we could get the world's value for our grain. To-day we do not get the world's value because of marketing limitations. Although the farmers of Western Australia, by their enthusiasm and loyalty in sticking to one another, have improved the conditions, still their success is discounted by the disorganisation in Eastern Australia. The Minister could give a good deal of encouragement to the marketing of wheat, and he could assist in the marketing of dairy products. He should insist that this work does not fall into the hands of those who exploit the producer, and he should assist all the organisations that are setting out to educate the producer and give him an opportunity not only to produce milk and dairy products, but to manufacture them in factories that he himself controls and owns. Then, after the manufacture, he will be able to market it himself without the assistance or intervention of middlemen. A big attempt is being made to prevent the dairy farmers of Western Australia from being exploited to the extent that dairy farmers are exploited in other parts of Australia. The Minister has already lent some assistance, particularly to group settlers in the Manjimup district, to provide a factory of their own and get the full result of their labour, and I trust that he and his Government will continue that policy of helping those who desire to help themselves, and thus get Western Australia organised somewhat on the lines of Denmark, where the producer procures the full result of his labour because he himself attends to the manufacturing and marketing of his product. If we get to that stage, I believe some of the difficulties of group settlement will be overcome, because we shall then have no difficulties about marketing. Where the producers of other States are more fortunate in respect of the carrying capacity of their land—they can carry more cows per acre and get a greater yield per cow—they lose considerably because they are limited to production, and because the manufacturing and marketing are in the hands of other people. We can counterbalance the lower production obtained in Western Australia by doing our own manufacturing and

marketing. This policy is worthy of the serious consideration of the Government, and I trust the start that the Minister has made will be an incentive to go further and encourage in every centre the establishment of co-operative creameries, butter factories and organisations for marketing, so that the producer shall get the full result of his labour. I trust that enthusiasm for land settlement will not lead the Minister to attempt too greatly to influence the Agricultural Bank trustees to advance liberally on light lands. The member for Avon (Mr. Griffiths) spoke of discussing with the trustees the matter of advances to and the problems of settlers in his own district. I, too, have had opportunities to discuss such matters with the trustees, and I am sure the experience of the members for Avon, Toodyay and York coincide with mine, that when one sits down with the trustees and has the files before him, he invariably finds that the departmental officer is right and that the farmer is wrong. Consequently, when we probe so many of these cases and get down to detail and find that the farmer is the man who is wrong, our confidence in the administration of the Agricultural Bank increases. Let the Minister be guided by those experts whom we have educated for so many years and who have shown such application to the job, who have never dropped us, and who will not drop us provided the Government place full confidence in their administration.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [10.44] : I listened with considerable interest to the remarks of the Minister for Lands. I regret that he has not, either in the course of this session or last, brought down a measure to force into use the unutilised land concerning which so much has been said in past years. During the life of the previous Government two measures were introduced, but unfortunately both were lost in another place. In August, 1924, following on the assumption of office of the present Government, another Bill was introduced, but it fell by the way-side. I am sorry the Minister has not persisted in this matter. It is not like him to take one defeat as final.

The Minister for Lands: It was tried three times, and we supported it each time.

MR. SAMPSON: One of the great disabilities from which the State suffers is the immense area of land that remains unutilised adjacent to our railways. This means that the railways have some difficulty in

paying their way. Figures have been given in the House showing the amount of transport that would be provided if these lands were brought under cultivation. The land tax has been doubled, but that was not the tax we asked for. That which was asked for was a tax that would, in effect, force into use lands that are at present held in idleness. Many people are desirous of taking up land, but have to go many miles from a railway in order to get it. The result is that wheat cannot be grown profitably in those circumstances. The battle-cry of the present Government to a large extent was that if returned to office it would force into use the idle lands. I am sorry the Bill that the Minister for Lands introduced did not become law. Such a measure is very desirable. I can only hope that although this Parliament has nearly come to an end, he will make a further attempt in this direction. I wish to congratulate the Minister upon the view point he has adopted in regard to group settlement. The statement made by him that there have been fewer complaints in this connection since he has been connected with the groups, is a gratifying one. The scheme will ultimately prove the salvation of the South-West. Time was when almost everybody found fault with the scheme. Gradually this belief has changed, and people are now realising that there can be no real success in the development of the South-West unless we push on with group settlement. The scheme is being developed, and the position to-day is very satisfactory. - This is by no means a flash in the pan. It is an effort that will ultimately prove to be in the best interests of the State and provide a solution of what was a most difficult problem. For over 80 years attempts have been made to develop that part of the State, with very little success. When travelling through the country a few years ago, one could see a small clearing here and there, the result of those years of effort. To-day, because of the scheme of the Mitchell Government, which has been carried on by the Minister for Lands, the whole outlook is changing. I am glad the Minister has taken such a broad view of the subject, and is carrying on the development of this work. The scheme is something in the nature of an inspiration. When one realises the constant drain upon the finances of the State in order to provide foodstuffs for the people, one can readily admit that without group settlements our

future would be much more difficult. It was gratifying to hear the Leader of the Opposition trace the development of the scheme, and to note the picture he painted of the ultimate success that would be assured. I fully believe that his words will be borne out. The country must be developed. The figures that are available in regard to the money paid on the importation of foodstuffs go to show that the proposition is sound. Last year butter to the value of £642,000, cheese £36,000, meat (bacon and hams) £175,000, milk and cream £180,000, fruit and vegetables in liquid £62,000, jams and jellies £122,000, onions £33,000, potatoes £74,000, and fruit juices 8,500, were imported into the State, in all practically £2,000,000 worth, mostly from the other States. No further argument is necessary to justify the effort that has been put forward to bring into productivity hitherto unutilised land in the South-West.

Mr. Heron: You will not alter that until our people use local products.

Mr. SAMPSON: We are doing that to a greater extent than before. We have only to produce the goods for them to be utilised.

Mr. Chesson: Excellent woollen goods are being manufactured at Albany, but the people are not using them.

Mr. SAMPSON: I refer to foodstuffs. The operations of the South-West Milk Products Company are sufficient to show that the people do use local dairy products when they are available.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: The difficulty is to get supplies.

Mr. SAMPSON: I am sorry the people do not insist upon getting Western Australian butter, jams, etc. There has been difficulty in securing supplies. The obstacle in regard to dairy products is being overcome. The Pascomi Company, whose factory is established in Stuart-street, North Perth, provides an example of what can be done. The factory is passing through a difficult period, but the effort will ultimately prove successful. The milk producers of the outer suburban area have banded together in this co-operative effort. They have taken steps whereby they will distribute their own milk to the consumers of the metropolitan area. This milk will first be pasteurised and clarified. When the public realise what this treatment means, and how it ensures that the filth which would otherwise be left in the milk and be consumed is removed from the product, I am convinced that the milk

will be almost exclusively used. It is a great pity that the advantages of clarified milk are not more widely known. From the standpoint of health alone it is very desirable that it should be known. I hope as time goes on this knowledge will become general. When that position is reached, the milk producers will come into their own. In place of being held in a state of bondage, they will have the opportunity of carrying on their own business, of selling their products at a reasonable price, and, in addition to looking after their own interests, provide something in the nature of proper food.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Butter factories are a great help.

Mr. SAMPSON: I believe that a large quantity of butter will be produced by the company as time goes on. Another dairy products company is being established at Harvey which, as a butter-producing centre, is making wonderful progress.

The Minister for Lands: It is a pity they are starting another there when there is a co-operative factory already established.

Mr. SAMPSON: I am referring to a co-operative concern. The rapidly increasing quantity of butter-fat that is available in the Harvey district makes this almost imperative, but it may be questionable whether it is wise to have two such factories in the one centre. The position from the standpoint of dairy products in Western Australia is altering. For this we must thank the group settlements. As the years go by, less money will leave Western Australia for the purchase of our food requirements. Our people will have the satisfaction of knowing that they are purchasing dairy products that are being produced within the State, and that the money hitherto lost to Western Australia will remain here for circulation and further development.

MR. KENNEDY (Greenough) [10.58]: The progress and prosperity of the State are due mostly to the opening up of agricultural and pastoral lands. Owing to the decline of goldmining it is very necessary that this land should be opened up and should be tenanted by the incoming migrants and our own surplus population. Though much has been done in the past, a great amount still remains to be done. Large areas of land still remain to be opened up. I do not altogether agree with the picture painted by the Leader of the Opposition. He visu-

alised an invasion of Chinese into this country. I think the Australian nation made a name for itself in Gallipoli, Flanders and France to such an extent that it will not be terrified by any suggestion of this sort.

Mr. Teesdale: We want the British nation to stand by.

The Premier: In case it may be needed.

Mr. KENNEDY: I agree with the member for Toodyay that many of the areas now held by farmers are too large for them. It would be better that these larger areas should be subdivided so that they may absorb more people.

Mr. Latham: That is bad propaganda.

Mr. KENNEDY: I congratulate the Government on having repurchased the Mendel estate, near Mullewa, comprising 33,112 acres, most of it first class land. With a view to showing the rush of applicants for land in the Victoria district more especially, I mention that for 18 blocks on that estate there were 150 applicants. As far back as 1904 the State repurchased the Mt. Erin property, consisting of 58,911 acres. The property was subdivided into farms. In 1909 the Government repurchased the Oakabella estate of 44,941 acres, and in 1910 the Narra Tarra estate of 23,758 acres. In 1911 the Bowes estate of 38,233 acres was repurchased, and in 1914 Yandanooka, comprising 140,309 acres. In the early part of this year two estates were offered to the Government—Kockatea, of 15,400 acres, and Wongoondy, of some 33,000 acres. These are adjoining properties, and the land is mostly first-class. I recognise the necessity for having the properties inspected and reported upon by the Lands Purchase Board, but I am sure they would be good propositions for subdivision into closer settlement blocks. Large numbers of people are crying out for land in the Victoria district. That district, which is within the assured rainfall of 11 to 14 inches, has had the highest average wheat yield in the State for many years. I repeat, the Government would do well to repurchase the Kockatea and Wongoondy estates.

The Minister for Lands: It all depends on the values.

Mr. KENNEDY: I do not know what is being asked for Wongoondy, but the price suggested for Kockatea is not high. This latter estate, in particular, would prove as advantageous for settlement as the Mendel estate. The Government would not lose a

penny on the transaction. During the course of the debate it has been pointed out that the Crown holds large areas of first-class land further than 12½ miles from existing railways. Undoubtedly it is necessary that railways should be built to make those areas available. Experience shows that to ask settlers to take up land many miles from railway communication means frequent failures. The officers of the Agricultural Bank and the Industries Assistance Board are most capable men, and know their business thoroughly; but there are instances in which hardship results to settlers in the Victoria district through the decisions of those officers.

Mr. Teesdale: I thought so once, but if you look into the cases you will change your mind.

Mr. KENNEDY: At a place called Gutha, about 40 miles from Mullewa, blocks were taken up and there were several failures, though these were probably due to the inexperience of the settlers. The settlers cleared the light lands, not being financially strong enough to clear the heavy country. They thought they would get returns from those light lands, but failure attended their efforts. Our experts now advise that if heavy lands are cleared and fallowed, good crops result. On the blocks abandoned, a number of soldier settlers now find themselves on the high road to prosperity. Those abandoned properties, which were overgrown with timber and were breeding grounds for vermin, now carry beautiful crops, and there is not one acre of Crown lands left to be taken up in that neighbourhood. Some of the settlers, however, are experiencing considerable difficulty in obtaining loans from the Agricultural Bank. This fact is due largely to the prejudice which the bank officials have against the district by reason of the failure of earlier settlers. The land is good York gum, salmon gum and gimlet country. If every one of those blocks were treated on its merits, the holders would do well. Another large area available for settlement is represented by the Balla and Dartmoor estates, comprising in all some 55,000 acres. This area is distant between 25 and 30 miles from the Northampton-Yuna railway. The land is in the main first class, but the blocks into which it has been divided are too large, the smallest being 5,000 acres. To furnish roads and water supply for an area of 50,000 acres divided into blocks of not less than

3,000 acres would not pay the Government. A thousand acres in that part of the country is quite enough for any settler. There were also many failures in the Ogilvy district during the early stages, but the settlers are now doing splendidly. Around Ajana the settlers cleared the light lands and left the heavy country until they were financially strong enough to cope with it. Thanks to experience gained by officers of the Agricultural Department, the settlers now find it payable to clear and fallow the heavy land, and in this way they are obtaining good returns. There is also a large area of first-class and second-class land and sand plain between Yuna and Mullewa. Owing to its being outside the radius of $12\frac{1}{2}$ miles from existing railways, the Agricultural Bank will not grant loans on it. The Railway Advisory Board have stated that there is not sufficient first class or even second class land to warrant an extension of the Yuna-Mullewa railway, but many people are prepared to take up areas there if assistance is granted by the Agricultural Bank. They would be within the assured rainfall, and no doubt they would do well. If, however, the bank refuse to assist those intending settlers, the area will have to remain a breeding ground for vermin, which is greatly to the detriment of the closely settled areas in the neighbourhood. I do hope the Government will consider the purchase of the estates I have mentioned. There is a clamour for land in the Victoria district.

The Minister for Lands: Those two estates have been referred to the Lands Purchase Board.

Mr. KENNEDY: I hope business will result. Many men who would make good settlers are prepared to go on these estates if they are subdivided. The result would be to provide increased traffic for the railways and to enhance the prosperity of the whole State.

MR. A. WANSBROUGH (Albany) [11.10]: I desire to express my appreciation of the Government's action in obtaining from the Surveyor General a report on the area to which so many favourable references have been made during this debate. That report is not quite what one would like, but nevertheless is just and fair. One could not expect a man riding through the area in a motor car to prepare an exhaustive report. I am absolutely convinced that the inspection of the Surveyor General will result in much

good, and will have the effect of bringing into use much land that is now merely a breeding ground for vermin. The Minister for Lands touched on the question of railway communication, and I entirely agree with his statement that railways are needed to develop the area referred to; but before we attempt to settle the back country we should have a comprehensive scheme of railway construction. Then settlers will know that within the next five, or ten, or possibly 15 years railway facilities will be at their disposal; and in the meantime they can go on developing their lands. I will not say that the whole of the area in question is first-class land, but after one passes the Stirling Range there is, towards Ongerup, a belt of settled country, now carrying its third generation, which is worthy of special consideration. Those settlers, after growing their produce, have to cart it a considerable distance and then despatch it via a port 140 miles away instead of shipping it from their natural port, which is distant only 35 miles. Such a state of affairs is utterly wrong. Our system of spur line railways, too, is wrong. Some proposals have been put up for the purpose of making the spur lines payable propositions. The Migration Commission will arrive here in a few days' time, and I hope that the area referred to will be one of the proposals submitted to them.

The Minister for Lands: The proposals to be submitted are on the Table of the House.

Mr. A. WANSBROUGH: I also hope that the long-promised Bridgetown line will be given consideration. The report of the Surveyor General, which has been read by the Minister for Lands, is an excellent report, considering that the journey was done at the rate of 120 miles per day, including a Sunday and one day on horseback. Possibly the report may occasion some disappointment among the settlers, but I am convinced that as a result of it the area will be classified and made available for selection in the near future.

Vote put and passed.

Notes—Agricultural Bank, Industries Assistance Board, Soldiers' Land Settlement £89,341, Group Settlement £10,799, Immigration £6,919, Council of Industrial Development £1,153—agreed to.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.15 p.m.