

That is all the hon. member has done to-night, just because a section of the Press has urged him on. Apparently he is to be the mouthpiece of that section of the Press that is going to attack this Government. Well, he will have a pretty busy time, will have many opportunities for spreading himself as he has done to-night, because I rather expect this Government will do many things that will incur the displeasure of a section of the Press of the State.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You do not object to the hon. member's moving for the papers?

The PREMIER: I do not. If the hon. member had desired to view the question with an open mind he would have moved for the papers without indulging in his high falutin' criticism. The papers are open to him, he could have had them.

Mr. Taylor: A nice chance I had.

The PREMIER: He said he wanted the papers, and then he proceeded to prejudice the matter.

Mr. Taylor: Following up interjections.

The PREMIER: He saw fit to read newspaper statements that enabled him to get into "Hansard" the fact that I had appeared in the police court before Mr. Magistrate Walter.

Mr. Taylor: I do not look upon that as a crime.

The PREMIER: And that I had been fined.

Mr. Taylor: No, I did not say that. You know better than that.

The PREMIER: It was entirely unnecessary to read those newspaper clippings. Everybody in the House and in the country knew what happened on that occasion. I am not ashamed of it. I am proud of it, and would do it again to-morrow. In order to again let down the magistrate the hon. member went on to say he did not think the case was lost on appeal, but thought it was dropped. I hope the hon. member is satisfied now that he has been able to read all that to the House and get it into "Hansard," where he will be able to refer to it in future. I am not concerned about it. Although I was fined, I hope I can take a stand above vindictiveness.

Mr. Taylor: I passed no comments on it.

The PREMIER: I hope I can bring to bear a mind free from spite or vindictiveness, notwithstanding anything that might have occurred between me and any officer in the Public Service. However, as I say, I can quote dozens of instances where actions similar to ours have been taken. We have conformed to the Public Service Act and to the Superannuation Act. We have moved in accordance with the precedents of all the years. Ever since I have been in the House it has been a common thing to have officers 60 years of age retired for reasons good and sufficient to the Government of the day. Nothing more was done in this instance than has been done in past years.

I have no doubt the hon. member will avail himself of opportunities to bring cases of this description before the House. It is a pity he has slumbered for so many years, that he has awakened only in his old age.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You do not object to the papers being asked for?

The PREMIER: No, but it is the way in which the motion was moved.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I think you misunderstood the hon. member.

The PREMIER: One thing the hon. member leaves no doubt about, namely, his meaning. One might disagree with him, but one certainly could not misunderstand what he is saying. Anyhow, if it will give him satisfaction in his old age—I will not say declining years—to adopt the role of defender of purity and justice in administration, I have no objection whatever to his having the papers. And if, in the course of our administrative duties, we do something that will enable him to more frequently indulge in that role, the hon. member is quite welcome to it.

Mr. Taylor: It is a pleasure to listen to you. I have worked you up a bit.

The PREMIER: This is only a preliminary. The papers are available. I have no objection to the motion, nor to the papers being laid on the Table.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 9.13 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 28th August, 1924.

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

QUESTION—FRUIT MARKETING, LEGISLATION.

Mr. SANPSON asked the Minister for Agriculture: Is it the intention of the Government to introduce legislation this session to control fruit marketing on the lines of the Queensland Fruit Marketing Organisation Act?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: This matter is now under consideration.

BILL—UNCLAIMED MONEYS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 21st August.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [4.36]: I have no objection to offer to the Bill. It is preferable that the Government Savings Bank Act should be the only statute relating to clients of the bank. The Premier said that under the Unclaimed Moneys Act savings bank deposits might be treated as unclaimed moneys if the depositor had not operated upon his account for a period of seven years, but the Act provides that the balance must be debited for seven years. In that respect it is precisely the same as the Government Savings Bank Act, though a depositor ceases to receive interest after the expiration of seven years. Of course the money, if claimed, must be paid to a client even after the expiration of that period. The Bill proposes to delete from Section 10 the words "of minors." Section 10 reads—

This Act shall not apply to the accounts of minors in the Government Savings Bank, nor to any unclaimed moneys which any trustee company is required by law to pay to the Treasurer, nor to any unclaimed moneys which any company or the liquidator of any company or the trustee of any bankrupt estate is required by law to pay into His Majesty's Treasury.

I do not know that it is very important, but I think it would have been well had all the words relating to the Government Savings Bank been eliminated from the Unclaimed Moneys Act.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—PRIVATE SAVINGS BANK.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 26th August.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [4.41]: I do not suppose any member will offer any serious objection to this Bill. The Government Savings Bank exists to encourage thrift and make absolutely safe the small savings of the people. It is quite sufficient to have one savings bank, and that the Government Savings Bank, represented

as it is in every centre throughout the State. During the last few years, unfortunately, the Commonwealth Bank has entered the savings bank business and has taken a great deal of money that would otherwise have been deposited in the State institution. Two millions of small savings have been deposited in the Commonwealth Savings Bank that otherwise would have been available for the State institution. Some people are under the impression that the Government Savings Bank was established to collect money for the use of the Government. As a matter of fact, the savings bank money never was cheap money until within the last few years. Until ten or twelve years ago we were able to borrow money at a cheaper rate than the savings bank money represented after taking into consideration the interest paid, the cost of the institution and the loss on money kept at call. Judging by the interest rate now being paid in Australia, that position has changed. I hope before long the rate will be lower than it is at present, and that we shall revert to the position that obtained a few years ago. I wish the Premier had simply introduced a Bill of one clause to provide that no private savings bank could be opened in the State, but perhaps there were difficulties in the way of that being done. A one-clause Bill of that description would have met my ideas of what should be done. The State Savings Bank is sufficient, and it is the right place for the people to deposit their small savings.

The Minister for Lands: The bank will not take over £1,000.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The limit is £1,300 and in raising the limit to that figure I think we went too far. All that the Government should be called upon to do is to encourage thrift and provide an absolutely safe investment for the small savings of the people. Thirteen hundred pounds cannot be described as small savings. We cannot, however, alter the law. I should, of course, be sorry to see another savings bank opened. The safeguards that are provided, however, are such that no one would think of opening one. I support the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [4.45]: The Leader of the Opposition has just suggested that a Bill of one clause should be brought down prohibiting any private savings bank from being established here. To a certain extent I agree with that. When, however, we look at the operations of the State Savings Bank and those of the Commonwealth Savings Bank, we find that a good deal remains to be done for the producer by these institutions. The Premier, in speaking upon this Bill, gave us a list showing the manner in which the savings of the depositors had been invested. This shows that a considerable amount has been invested in metropolitan activities. In fact, practically the whole of the funds of the bank are in-

vested in metropolitan works. There are also mortgages on freehold security. I should like to know how much of the money invested in the bank is let out on freeholds in the agricultural and pastoral districts.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Thirty-three thousand pounds.

Mr. ANGELO: In municipal debentures £35,000 has been invested; in metropolitan water supplies, £508,000; in water board debentures, £71,000; in local inscribed stock £3,123,000; in land drainage, £8,000; in road board debentures, £14,000; in Treasury bills, £746,000; in Treasury bonds, £630,000; and on fixed deposits, £66,000. Upon debentures in connection with agricultural land purchases the amount invested is £240,000. That may be for the purchase of estates for returned soldiers or migrants. How much of these deposits, lodged by agricultural and pastoral people in their own particular districts, has gone back to them to assist them in the development of their particular industries? The following appears in a newspaper called "The Launceston Examiner":—

The fact that something like three million sterling goes out of Australia annually to pay dividends to the English shareholders of the banks now operating in Australia is something to make the farmer think. The fact that "the man on the land" pays into the bank a far greater amount than is loaned out to farmers is another point that should bring home to him the fact that he should support a bank that lends only to the primary producer. In one district in Tasmania the savings bank received over £600,000 in deposits from farmers in two years, but not one solitary shilling was loaned to farmers in that district in return.

I should like to know to what extent that principle applies in Western Australia. The Primary Producers' Bank has been referred to. The Premier did not hesitate to say that this Bill had something to do with that institution. A wrong impression seems to exist in connection with that bank, and it is only fair to the shareholders, this House, and the general public, that I should give a brief history of its promotion and its objects. The genesis of the bank was the Land Credits Ltd. This institution was formed in New South Wales a few years ago for the lending of money to farmers and pastoralists on the ballot system. It proved a success, but as it was availed of only by the lucky shareholders and did not apply to the majority, it was deemed necessary to enlarge its activities. A small bank called the Farmers' Bank was formed, and was later on registered as the Primary Producers' Bank of Australia. It was claimed by a small section of the Press that this bank altered its name three times. It was first the Land Credits Ltd., it was then called the Farmers' Bank, which did not appeal to the majority of the shareholders, and at the first general meeting of shareholders the name

was altered to its present title. This institution was registered on the 16th February, 1923, and the first branch was opened on the 3rd March, the same year. Already £1,800,000 worth of shares have been applied for. The paid up capital of the bank is over £200,000, and a reserve fund of £73,000 has already been established. No fewer than 61 branches are operating throughout Australia. While most of the banks doing business in Australia keep liquid assets to the value of between 36 and 53 per cent. of their liabilities, this bank has considerably over 50 per cent., and at times up to 80 per cent., of liquid assets. For every £1 that is owing to the public, the bank holds over 30s. worth of assets. Not a single person has received a penny out of the bank's funds for promotion purposes, and no share was given away to anyone. The directors have had to pay for their shares in the same way that shareholders have done. The expenses of flotation and establishment had, of course, to be paid. Wonders have been done in 18 months, seeing that 61 branches are now operating in Australia. How has this extraordinary success been achieved?

The Premier: By good management, I should say.

Mr. ANGELO: Undoubtedly, but I am speaking of the whole concern. The producers have realised that existing banks prefer city securities, and on these are prepared to lend up to 80 per cent. of their value. The producer, who is the backbone of the country, has, however, to go cap in hand in order to get up to 30 per cent. of the value of his holding. On top of that he is often charged a higher rate of interest. Producers recognise, as they should have done long ago, that to obtain justice they must control their own finances. They, therefore, established the bank that is owned and controlled by the man on the land for the benefit of the man on the land. Not a penny is loaned to anyone who is not a producer. The object of the bank is to use the whole of its resources in building up the pastoral industry in the various States. When a Bill similar to this came before the Queensland Parliament, decided objections were taken to it. The bank had only been in operation then about six months. That Bill was passed, but to-day the Queensland Government are very sympathetic towards the Primary Producers' Bank.

The Premier: So is this Government.

Mr. ANGELO: My object is to make the Government sympathetic. I want the Government to follow the lead of the Queensland Government. The general manager of the institution went to England the other day, armed with excellent letters from the Queensland Government. His purpose is to see if the activities of the bank cannot be enlarged.

The Premier: I will give you similar letters if you will go to the Old Country.

Mr. ANGELO: I will read a few words from the speech made by the Home Secretary of the Queensland Government dealing with Australian banks. It is not entirely in sympathy with the other banks but I will read an extract from his remarks, as they appeared in "The Official Bulletin":—

The cause of great trouble was the banks—they were doing nothing for agricultural extension—and because exchange running is good they were squeezing the farmers and making 15 to 20 per cent. out of the money that should be spent in assistance to the settlers. There is, he said, 55 million pounds to the credit of Australia in London and yet the Government had to go cap in hand and then found it difficult to get money for renewal of loans. The people of Australia have to slave whilst the money lies idle in England. He saw no reason why the Bank of England should not issue notes and thus the people of Australia would be able to live in prosperity, whereas it is now held back from them. The banks, he reiterated, were retarding industry in Australia. There was one exception, the Primary Producers' Bank, which was doing its best to help by extending relief so far as it could.

Those remarks were made by a member of the Government that 12 months ago passed a Bill, similar to the one we have now, with the object of preventing the bank from getting a foothold in Queensland. The institution has now proved that it is of greater benefit to that State than are probably the other banks, in the direction of assisting the pastoral industry. The bank has financed the whole of the maize pool of Queensland this year, and has been asked by the Government to finance a rather smaller undertaking, the milk pool of Southern Queensland. I cannot see the necessity for the Bill now before us. The Premier said it was desired to safeguard the interests of depositors. It is a pity the Premier, before introducing the Bill, was not made aware of the position of the Primary Producers' Bank. The Bill is evidently aimed at the bank. Apart from the fact that it holds over 30s. worth of securities for every £1 worth of liabilities, it has 1½ million of uncalled capital available from the shareholders. This creates a margin of security representing about 400 per cent. for every £1 deposited in the books of the institution. The deposits of the Savings Bank section in Western Australia at present amount to only a few hundred pounds. The thrift department is a very minor branch of the bank's activities. The Premier referred to £1,000 having been withdrawn from the State Savings Bank at Katanning and placed back in the Savings Bank on the same day. I assure him that this money could

not have been taken out of the State Savings Bank and put into the Primary Producers' Bank savings department. It was taken out for a very different reason, and one that I feel sure he would endorse. This represented the savings of a man who had desired to acquire a farm. Having saved £1,000 he felt justified in asking a financial institution to lend him the balance of the money required to effect the purchase of the farm. I am almost certain this was the case mentioned by the Premier. The man's object was a laudable one, and the Premier would be the last to regret the loss of that £1,000 from the Government Savings Bank. But let me tell him, as he told us himself, that the £1,000 went back again, thereby making no loss to the Government institution. Why did it go back? Because the desire of the bank is to work in perfect harmony with the State Savings Bank. Whilst it is operating in this State, a good portion of its money at short call will, with the consent of the Treasurer, be deposited with the State Savings Bank, in the hope that that institution will be able to make good use of it and thus assist in the development of the State to some little further extent. The man who creates the wealth should certainly be entitled to say how his wealth shall be spent; and therefore the Government would be well advised to try to invest that amount of their loanable resources which is made available by deposits in the agricultural and pastoral districts, for the assistance of the agricultural and pastoral industries. It should be made available by the State Savings Bank, as by other banks, to farmers and pastoralists who want to borrow money in those districts. Some criticism was levelled at the Primary Producers' Bank because that institution expressed a willingness to take shilling deposits. It is not much of a jump from 1s. to £5, and I observe that other banks exhibit in their chambers placards asking for deposits from £5 upwards. The intention of this bank is to devote the whole of its loanable resources available in each State for the promotion and advancement of primary industries within that State. It is a pity the Treasurer cannot do something to handicap the chief aggressor against our Government Savings Bank—I refer to the Commonwealth Savings Bank. The Commonwealth have invaded our territory in that respect, and what do they do with the money they obtain from us? The question should be looked into, with a view to ensuring that deposits made here with the Commonwealth Savings Bank are rendered available for loans in this State. I do not oppose the Bill, but I do ask the Premier to adjourn the Committee stage with a view to my

getting a slight amendment drafted in Clause 6. That clause, as printed, stipulates that a deposit of £10,000 shall be lodged with the Treasurer. I would suggest to the Treasurer that the clause be so amended as to limit the deposit to the amount which the bank holds on behalf of its clients until that amount reaches £10,000; and then let £10,000 be the maximum. The savings branch deposits of the Primary Producers' Bank at present do not amount to £1,000, and to ask for a deposit at the Treasury of £10,000 is rather hard on the bank. Moreover, it would prevent the bank from assisting at least 15 other shareholders who are farmers, if the £10,000 was insisted upon, as the average loan in this State to farmers appears to be about £750. I trust, therefore, that the Premier will accept my suggestion. It is rather hard that 70 per cent. of the additional business should go to the Government, but there is no doubt that a good portion of the money will in future be used for assistance to the primary industries; and therefore I for one have no objection.

Mr. SAMPSON (Swan) [5.5]: I have a few suggestions to offer with regard to the State Savings Bank. All the States have suffered from what was known at the time as the "Federal steal," meaning the establishment in the various States of a Commonwealth Savings Bank. Western Australia suffers severely from that fact to-day. Unfortunately we are not able to control the Commonwealth Savings Bank, but Western Australia could do something towards popularising its State Savings Bank. In many centres our Savings Bank is not rightly situated, and not located in the right type of building. Funds are urgently needed for developmental purposes throughout the State, and therefore the Government should give consideration to obtaining greater publicity for the operations of the State Savings Bank. New branches should be located in properly constructed buildings, to be erected; and the business generally should be encouraged. In Victoria the State Savings Bank has made wonderful progress. The Victorian State does recognise the help which comes from this source. If we acted similarly, if we established branches of the State Savings Bank in centres which lack them now, and, further, if we established them in buildings located where people are likely to come and make deposits, we should be much better off for funds. In the country districts the business of the State Savings Bank is often carried on in the local store. One can see how difficult it is for a person who desires to deposit an amount in the bank to go along to such a branch. There is always a disinclination to let such business be known to the trades people. Moreover, there are some persons who are prepared to

deposit their money notwithstanding that the local tradesman has an account against them. Apart from the point of view of morality, there is an obligation on us to secure all the money we possibly can. An improvement might result if the State Savings Bank arranged for branch offices to be established at the various country railway stations. But, starting with the head office at the State Savings Bank here in Perth, the quarters are unsuitable. In my opinion the main office is highly unsuitable. There is not sufficient room available, and generally there is considerable scope for improvement. These remarks are in the nature of suggestions. I feel sure that if the State Savings Bank is housed in better buildings more suitably situated, and if greater publicity be given to its operations, the State would benefit in that more money would be deposited with it.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Lutey in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1, 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Interpretation:

Mr. LATHAM: Does the Premier intend to include the banking business conducted by the Westralian Farmers Limited in the definition of "Private savings bank"? It seems to me that that business could be brought within the definition. If that is actually the case, progress should be reported so that investigations could be made. It is known that the Westralian Farmers Limited pay a small rate of interest on money deposited with them.

The PREMIER: I was not aware that the Westralian Farmers carried on savings bank business.

Mr. Thomson: Theirs is not a savings bank.

Mr. Angelo: They pay interest on deposits on current account.

The PREMIER: I am not prepared to say what operations in the way of banking are carried on by the Westralian Farmers. If they are not carrying on a savings bank business at present, but are competent to do it, and if they at any time undertake it, they would come under this measure. I see no reason why they should not come under it in the same way as the bank mentioned by the member for Gascogne. That is the whole purpose and intention of the Bill. The principle is sound and should be applicable to every institution, or it is unsound and should not apply at all. The member for York cannot oppose the clause on account of the Westralian Farmers unless he is opposed to the principle of the Bill, which is that private savings bank business shall be carried on only under the provisions of this measure.

Mr. LATHAM: I do not think the Westralian Farmers' banking business is act-

ually savings bank business, but it may come under this interpretation.

Mr. Angelo: Read the next interpretation, "Savings bank business."

Mr. LATHAM: The Westralian Farmers have an arrangement with their shareholders.

The Premier: The next interpretation sets out what "Savings bank business" means.

Mr. LATHAM: The banking business of the Westralian Farmers, not being actually savings bank business, to bring them under this measure would be unfair.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The clause will not operate as suggested by the member for York because of the definition of what is savings bank business. Without that definition it could be assumed that the Bill would apply to the little bit of banking business done by the co-operative movement. The money loaned to the Westralian Farmers' Ltd. is dealt with much as would be deposits in the Western Australian Bank. The only difference is that the company pays interest. That money does not earn compound interest as set out in the definition of savings bank business. I am satisfied that the Bill will not apply to the business conducted by the Westralian Farmers Ltd.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Government control banking but I believe it is possible under the Companies Act to get the permission of the court to open a bank. That course, I believe, was pursued by the Westralian Farmers Ltd. and that firm was permitted to conduct banking business. It would be a stretch of the imagination to say that that business was savings bank business. I do not know that we need worry about the point that has been raised.

Mr. LINDSAY: I was of opinion that the Westralian Farmers would be brought within the scope of the Bill. I made inquiries this morning and ascertained that this particular point was known to the firm's accountant. He was to confer with the manager and to let me know if it was considered that the Bill would apply to the company's business. I have received no communication and personally I am satisfied that the firm does not come within the scope of the Bill.

Mr. Latham: It is we who have to pass the Bill, not the Westralian Farmers Ltd.

Mr. SAMPSON: The Bill will not apply to the Westralian Farmers Ltd.

Hon. J. Cunningham: If the Westralian Farmers Ltd. are carrying on savings bank business why should they not be brought under the Bill?

Mr. SAMPSON: I am not disputing that point. If the Government Savings Bank does not live up to its responsibilities, I do not know why companies should be hindered from undertaking the work if they desire to do so. In my opinion the Government Savings Bank does not live up to its responsibilities.

The Premier: In what respect?

Mr. SAMPSON: I have already indicated that in this Chamber.

The Minister for Lands: Give us your suggestions.

Mr. SAMPSON: I have already done so. If the Government institution does not live up to its obligations we should not restrict other organisations that are prepared to do so.

The PREMIER: The hon. member is well aware of the difficulties that confront the Government Savings Bank in attempting to live up to its obligations.

Mr. Thomson: If he does not, he should know.

The PREMIER: Since the advent of the Commonwealth Savings Bank the State has had to vacate post offices—

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Railway stations and all sorts of places.

The PREMIER: Quite so. In consequence we have had to adopt measures that are unsatisfactory in that agencies of the State Savings Bank have had to be established with private business people and traders. Naturally there is an objection to allowing the local tradesman to know the financial position of private individuals, who have been averse to doing business with the State institution. Every effort has been made by the management to overcome that difficulty. It is not such an easy matter, particularly in small country towns where the choice is limited.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Besides that, the business people are not keen on being worried with the agencies.

The PREMIER: That is so; in fact many will not accept the agencies. These difficulties all arise owing to the invasion by the Commonwealth of the savings bank business. The member for Swan may rest assured that those responsible for the management of the bank will do everything possible to provide the facilities to which he has referred. I am satisfied that the clause does not affect the Westralian Farmers Ltd. I am prepared to adjourn the further discussion of the Bill when we reach Clause 6.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 4 and 5, agreed to.

Progress reported.

BILL—CLOSER SETTLEMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from 26th August.

Mr. DAVY (West Perth) [5.25]: I feel constrained to make some remarks concerning the state of the Bill. On the general principles of the measure, I do not wish to say more than that I am inclined to agree with the member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson) that the Bill should have been introduced after the Government land tax proposals had been placed before the House. It is no use pretending one thing out of

the House and another inside the Chamber. During the recent election I was questioned as to my attitude regarding a Closer Settlement Bill. I then said that I did not think such a Bill was a scientific method of attaining the desired result and that I considered some form of land taxation would be better. I thought we should frame a tax that would cause the incidence of the impost to be, if possible, increased on the unimproved value of the land rather than on the income derived from the land. That would be a better means of achieving the desired result.

The Minister for Railways: And if a man had sufficient money to pay the tax?

Mr. DAVY: If he has sufficient money and is prepared to pay a tax on the land that is much greater than the value of the land, let him have it by all means.

Mr. Latham: They are not likely to do that.

Mr. DAVY: They do not do it in practice.

The Minister for Railways: Don't they?

Mr. DAVY: At any rate, I do not wish to labour that point. My purpose in speaking is to point out to the House certain defects in the Bill from a machinery point of view. Those defects, it appears to me, will make the Bill unworkable should it become law. As I understand it, the work done in Committee represents more or less a trimming process. At that stage we endeavour to put the Bill into such shape as we may deem necessary, but the alterations do not amount to much more than mere trimming, adding a bit here and striking out a bit there. It appears to me—I am much mistaken if I am not right—that such serious amendments to the Bill will be necessary before it can become a workable piece of legislation that it will not be possible to do it all during the Committee stage. I propose to refer to certain clauses of the Bill to establish that point. I will pass by the constitution of the board which, however, does not appear to me to give any guarantee that any member of that body will know anything about farming. One member of the board is to be an officer of the Department of Lands and Surveys, and another is to be an officer of the Agricultural Bank. The Bill does not indicate how highly placed in those Government Departments the officers referred to will be. The third member of the board is to be a person having local knowledge of the matters under inquiry for the time being. I do not see in that provision any strong guarantee that the board will necessarily be competent. Clause 3 sets out that the board may inquire into the suitability and requirement for closer settlement of any unutilised and unproductive land. Those words are rather vague. Clause 4 provides that the board may inquire and report in writing to the Minister. No power is given to the board, however, to enter upon the land that in their opinion is unutilised and unproductive

and should be made available for closer settlement, to call for returns, to find out what is being done with the land, to find out what profits are being made from it, how many sheep are being carried, or how many acres are under cultivation. That being so, the only way the board, apparently, can inquire into these matters as required by the Bill, will be to look over fences and to pick up scraps of information or hearsay in the neighbourhood. If the board is to make an inquiry that will justify the issuing of a report, the board should have ample power to enter on the land, inspect it, call for returns and any other information it might think fit. How, otherwise, can the board tell whether the land is being put to a reasonable use? There again we have a defect: "Reasonable use" is a vague term. Apparently two members in favour of the Bill, the Minister for Railways and the Leader of the Opposition, take entirely different views of what "reasonable use" means. One thinks it means getting a big production irrespective of profit, while the other thinks it means getting a large profit out of the land.

The Minister for Lands: There would be but little land developed if profit were the sole object.

Mr. DAVY: I submit that one cannot make more reasonable use of the land than by getting from it the maximum profit.

Hon. J. Cunningham: Sometimes one can do that by holding it and selling it.

Mr. DAVY: If a man holds 5,000 acres and makes a profit of £2,000 out of it, whereas by some other method he would make only £1,000 profit, surely it is better, in the interests, not only of the owner but of the community, that the land should be used to produce the £2,000.

The Minister for Lands: Not in the interests of the people.

Mr. DAVY: Yes, because if a profit of £2,000 be made, it is available for distribution, and so inevitably will increase employment.

The Minister for Lands: How will it do that if there be no employment to offer the people?

Mr. DAVY: The greater volume of capital in circulation cannot fail to increase employment. The term "reasonable use" is ambiguous and difficult of interpretation. However, it must be clear that for any board to inquire into the suitability of an area and find out whether it is being put to reasonable use, the board must have full powers of entry and inquiry. Now the very next clause—

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not like interrupting the hon. member, but it is not permissible on the second reading to discuss other than the principles and general subject-matter of a Bill. To discuss clauses serially is not in order. All that the hon. member has pointed out so far can be adequately dealt with as the clauses are reached in Committee. Clauses can be added, de-

iciencies made good, and corrections effected in Committee. What the hon. member is now doing is proper to the Committee stage, but out of order on the second reading.

Mr. DAVY: I thank you, Sir, for the kindly rebuke. May I submit this: If a member be of opinion that amendments necessary to a Bill are of such magnitude as to make it impossible to effectively carry them out in Committee, may he not be permitted to illustrate that on the second reading by reference to clauses, intending to put it to the House that the Bill should be rejected on the second reading?

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member, so far as he has gone, has shown to the House nothing that cannot be amended in Committee.

Mr. DAVY. I do not wish to argue with you, Sir, but I want to put my point: Suppose I were able to show that a large number of serious amendments were necessary, would it not be competent for me to ask the House to refer the Bill back for redrafting? Would that not be proper?

Mr. SPEAKER: On general principles, yes. Generally the hon. member can attack any phase of the Bill, but he must not take clause after clause and discuss their defects. These matters are purely for Committee.

Mr. DAVY: I shall endeavour to say what I have to say without offending your ruling. A serious defect in the Bill is that, on the report having been made by the board to the Governor, the Governor has power to declare the land reported upon subject to the Act. When that is done, the owner is entitled within a certain time to notify the board of his intention to subdivide. That notification is binding on all persons having or thereafter acquiring any interest in the land. The carrying out of the subdivision has to be to the satisfaction of the board in all respects. The owner submits his plans of subdivision, and the board proceeds to tell him what is to be done, how and when the land is to be sold, whether by auction or privately, and at what price. But there is no obligation on the board to do that at any time. That is shown quite clearly in a provision prescribing that at any time the Governor, if he thinks the land is being properly utilised, may withdraw the land from the Act. Obviously that may occur years afterwards. And while the board is doing nothing in respect of the land, the land is hung up. The owner cannot mortgage it or sell it honestly, because if he did so the innocent purchaser, who has no means of getting notice of what is going on, would find that his advance of money had no security whatever. That is a very serious defect in the plan of the Bill, as opposed to the detail of its clauses. It is going to be amazingly difficult to amend such a defect in Committee. To get the Bill into satisfactory shape it would be necessary to recon-

sider it and redraft it—for there are other serious defects that add to the necessity for redrafting.

The Minister for Railways: The late Government brought down a similar Bill.

Mr. DAVY: That is so, but I have criticised even actions of the past Government. I do not expect to find that any Government have produced or said everything strictly in accord with my views. The criticism I am now offering, one would be entitled to offer to such a Bill even if it were brought down by one's own party. These defects in the Bill ought to be cleared up and remedied in the quietude of an office rather than in the hurly-burly of this Chamber.

Mr. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington) [5.41]: I have gone carefully through the Bill, and it seems to me that in Committee some of the clauses will have to be amended. It would not be amiss to give some attention to the general land question. To-day we are about to settle large areas of agricultural land by holding out to settlers the inducement that they shall have a property in the land, which they can regard as being their own. That has been the policy of the State for many years, and in various ways people have been induced to take up land. Now we are to say to those people—

The Minister for Lands: Not now. It was said three years ago, and you supported it.

Mr. GEORGE: I quite understand that. I am giving my views now.

The Minister for Lands: Then what you gave us three years ago were not your own views?

Mr. GEORGE: I think I have the right to give my views now.

The Minister for Lands: If I had remained silent for three years, I would continue to maintain that silence.

Mr. GEORGE: In a few years I shall be silent for all time, but just now I want to state my views. It is proposed that through the medium of a board we shall say to the people on the land, "Your methods have been bad. You have not carried out what we think you ought to have done. Of course it has been your own loss, but because you have not done what we think the proper thing, even though through lack of money it was impossible for you to do it, we are going to take your land from you." We would not dare say that to any other working man in the State. We would not tell another man that he must be a carpenter, or a plumber, or a painter. Yet we are going to tell the man on the land that because he has not worked his land in the way we think he should have done, we propose to take it from him. We do not say that to any other class of working man in the State. For instance, we do not say to a carpenter, "You should not be a carpenter because you do not know the trade thoroughly; you should be en-

gaged in some other work." For years we are going to say to the farmers that it is our intention to criticise methods and sit in judgment on what has been done in the past. That kind of thing is not in the best interests of the State. It is possible, of course, that when the Bill is in Committee, some of these things will be modified. I am not impugning the intentions or the bona fides of the Government; it is not necessary to carp at what the Government are doing or what is being done by individual members, but a feeling does exist that something of the nature of what I have related is going to take place. There are instances in the South-West, no doubt, where people may not have utilised the land they hold to the best advantage. The exact position in this respect, however, can only be ascertained by inquiry. I know of land in the South-West, now running sheep and stock, and which is being held for the children of those who now occupy it. There is nothing wrong in a man acquiring a large area, so that when his children are ready to take up a portion of it, it will be there available for them. We know of people who are here searching for land but who cannot get it. The Minister told us that there was not much available land within easy distance of a railway, though there was a good deal that was not served by railways. This land, however, is bound to be taken up and utilised as settlement increases. It does not necessarily follow that because a man is in possession of a large area of land, he is withholding it from occupation. He has a perfect right to hold it for his children. It has been the policy of the State to permit this, and now we propose to tell these people that we are going to allow a board to declare that the land is not producing to the extent that it should be doing and that, therefore, they are to be penalised, and this, too, whether the holder has done as well as he was able to do with the property. We are going to declare that it should have been made more productive, and because that has not been done we are going to take it from him and, of course, compensate him to some extent. But what is compensation to a man who is relieved of property where he has lived for many years, and where he has made his home? That aspect deserves and requires consideration. I am not one of those who believe that people should hold big areas of land without utilising it; I believe that an individual should show his bona fides by putting to use all the land that he holds so far as his resources will allow. I do not believe it is right, and it was never contemplated by the State—I hold strong views on this matter—that a man should acquire land and hold it for the unearned increment. I trust that due consideration will be given to those who have attempted to do their duty with the land they hold. These are my views.

Mr. NORTH (Claremont) [5.50]: Seeing that the Bill has been before the House previously, it is not necessary to do more than to merely say that we are here to support it. I may draw attention, however, to this one point, that in the course of time the principle of doing away with sheep areas may leave us in a very awkward position, because we are almost the only country in the world at the present time that has big spaces left for sheep.

The Premier: Small areas have been taken up for sheep.

Mr. NORTH: That may be so, but the fact remains that the time may come when we may find ourselves short of room for sheep, with which to feed and clothe the world. That will be the position, because closer settlement has overtaken about three-quarters of the habitable globe. There is very little room left in the world for expansion, and it would be a very sorry day for us if we found ourselves in the position of not being able, by restricting sheep raising to cramped areas, to supply wool and mutton outside on a large scale. Having made this point, I desire to support the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. C. P. WANSBROUGH (Beverley) [5.52]: I realise that we are in the position that if the Government choose, they can carry the measure through the House. I firmly believe, however, that those responsible for the Bill are not fully seized with the state of affairs as it exists to-day, and to which the provisions of the Bill will apply. The Minister told us that there were over three million acres of land in the Avon Valley to which the Bill would apply. I wish to make my position clear with regard to this statement. When it was made by the Minister, I interjected that the land he had in mind was producing more to-day in the form of mutton and wool than it could possibly do under any form of closer settlement. In the leading Press of the next day, my interjection was reported as having been to the effect that the Avon Valley was absolutely unfit for closer settlement.

The Minister for Lands: I took it that way, too.

Mr. C. P. WANSBROUGH: If the Minister will turn up "Hansard" he will find my remark correctly stated. "Hansard" gave what I meant to imply and what I now wish to emphasise, and it is, that if the Bill is applied to those areas in the Avon Valley the Minister has in mind, he will do something that will retard progress and minimise considerably the production of wealth, because I am satisfied that there is no land in the Avon Valley suitable for closer settlement on the lines the Minister has in view.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You would not say that the land should not be subdivided?

Mr. C. P. WANSBROUGH: I am afraid the trend of present day thought, so far as areas suitable for mixed farming in the Avon Valley are concerned, is very much at sea. It has been forcibly brought home to us, more particularly in connection with the repurchase and subdivision of estates, that mistakes have been made. I have in mind the Mount Hardy estate in the York district, which was repurchased some 16 years ago and was apportioned to various settlers, totalling 13 in number. That is an estate typical of the Avon Valley land. At the present time the property has got back into the hands of five people. That is not because the land is not suitable for settlement, but mainly because the areas are too small to enable the people holding them for successful farming. I can come closer home and quote an instance in my own district. Some 20 years ago, when the land there was thrown open for selection, we had 27 farmers in small areas. To-day the number has gone back to 12, and so it goes on. We find that 1,000 acres in the Avon Valley is not enough to enable a man to carry on successfully. We find also that if a farmer sticks to a wheat proposition, he will fail. All now turn their attention to mixed farming and larger areas. I have no time for the man who dummies, but I do wish to sound a note of warning by saying that the Bill will give too much power to a board of three men when it proposes to clothe the board with the authority to say that land is not being reasonably worked, and without giving the right of some form of appeal. I understand that certain amendments will be proposed when the Bill is in Committee and I trust the Minister will receive them sympathetically. I am very much afraid that the Minister, or his officials, do not sufficiently realise the position regarding the Avon Valley. I have quoted the Avon Valley as a typical example of the land in that part of the State.

The Minister for Lands: That is the only area classified.

Mr. C. P. WANSBROUGH: There must be at least a million acres in that area unsuitable for closer settlement. It is composed of white gum, red gum and jarrah, and many thousands of pounds will have to be spent on it if the Government carry out their intentions.

Mr. Griffiths: There is also a good deal of stony country there.

Mr. C. P. WANSBROUGH: Yes, and in addition it is infested with poison and noxious weeds. In saying this I have no desire to decry the State, but I am warning the Minister of what is a fact that

was not borne in mind by the officials who classified the land. I do not wish to reflect on those gentlemen, but from past experience of the officers of the Agricultural Bank and the Survey Department, I know that they have not the practical or modern knowledge necessary to enable them to speak with authority. I would not be justified in permitting the Bill to go through without sounding a note of warning, and that is, that the areas in close proximity to the railways are not suitable for the closer settlement that the Minister has in view.

Mr. CHESSON (Cue) [6.0]: I welcome this Bill. It is absurd to allow people to hold large areas of land alongside the railways without putting it to profitable use. The State has built railways at great expense, and a lot of land in close proximity to them has been held for speculative purposes. This measure will compel people to put their land to the best use. If land now used for sheep were put under wheat, more employment would be provided. The question as to what constitutes its best use will be decided by a competent board. People living in remote parts of the country have complained of the excessive railway freights. If the agricultural land alongside railways is brought under profitable production, the Government should be able to assist the people outback by reducing railway freights. Land values taxation would also assist, provided the proceeds were earmarked for that specific purpose. Provision is made that land may be resumed for closer settlement at the value returned for taxation purposes plus 10 per cent. This provision appears in the New Zealand Act, and it should suffice here.

Mr. George: Are you going to provide a farmer with other land so that he can make a living?

Mr. CHESSON: The farmer's interests will be safeguarded. If he wishes to subdivide his land, he will have ample opportunity to do so. An owner should not be permitted to hold land indefinitely without putting it to profitable use.

Mr. George: But a man cannot farm unless he has land.

Mr. CHESSON: Neither could he farm profitably without the facilities provided by the State. When those facilities are provided, he should put his land to its best use.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: Who is to be the judge of what is the best use?

Mr. CHESSON: The board will be competent to decide. It is necessary to have some body to decide the point, and if amendments are moved to ensure that the board will be competent, they will receive favourable consideration. The passing of the Bill will mean that more people will be put on the land, that the land will be put to its best use and that railway freights to people in the outback country will be reduced.

Mr. LINDSAY (Toodyay) [6.4]. After listening to the speeches of lawyers, farmers and miners, I feel somewhat diffident about discussing the Bill. The member for West Perth (Mr. Davy) spoke of the need for additional provisions. I have studied the Acts operating in various States, and have been struck with the smallness of this measure compared with the largeness of theirs. One clause of the Bill provides that the Government may make regulations. This may account for the difference. In the other States the regulations are embodied in the Act so that people know exactly their effect. I take it the Government may make regulations along the lines suggested by the member for West Perth, but I would prefer to see them set out in the Bill. The members for West Perth and for Guildford suggested that this Bill should have been held over until after the Land and Income Tax Bill had been considered. I repeat what I said on the Address-in-reply that the Land and Income Tax Bill will not effect what we are seeking to attain under this Bill. A measure that should have been introduced before the Closer Settlement Bill is one dealing with the valuation of land. The Bill sets out that the amount of compensation to be paid shall be 10 per cent. increase on the unimproved value for taxation purposes. The unimproved value represents the valuation made by the local governing bodies. The Government have not made a valuation. They have made a start, but many of the land values are those arrived at by local governing bodies many years ago. I do not agree with some members that because a man's land valuation may be light, he is acting unjustly in not getting it altered. The value has been created by the local governing body and that is the figure on which he pays taxation. Had a Valuation of Land Bill been introduced, it would have ensured a fair deal to the land owner and to the State.

The Minister for Lands: I do not think the road boards want a land valuation, but it would be a good thing for the State.

Mr. LINDSAY: I should have no objection to it. I realise that in the past valuations have been low. Let me give an instance how road boards make their valuations. I myself have had to make some.

The Minister for Lands: It all depends upon the subsidy on the rates.

Mr. LINDSAY: When a road board was formed, it received £50 with which to start. We could not pay a valuer, so the road board members had to do the work. That was the basis of the original valuation and it stood until the Government appointed a valuer, who increased the values by 200 to 400 per cent. I do not contend that existing values are too high, but land owners should have some appeal, for which no provision is made at present.

The Minister for Lands: You have an appeal to the Taxation Department.

Mr. LINDSAY: It is a case of appeal-in from Cæsar to Cæsar. True, we could go to the Supreme Court, but in districts like mine the amount of the land tax is low, and it is not worth while.

The Minister for Lands: Some of the largest holdings are in your district.

Mr. LINDSAY: I agree. When a man's property is to be resumed, he is in a different position. Although the Bill provides that 10 per cent. shall be added to the unimproved value, there is nothing to say that the owner shall receive any increase in the value of improvements. Clause 7 provides that compensation shall be based on the unimproved value of the land, and on the fair value of the improvements assessed at the added value given to the land for the time being by reason of such improvements. That may seem fair on the face of it, but many men who have taken up land have done so to make a home. They have not added improvements with the object of selling their holdings. If I wished to sell my land to-day, I would lose considerably on the improvements I have effected. A property on which sheep are being run may be resumed for other purposes. The owner may have provided water in the various paddocks, together with other improvements making it suitable for sheep, but if that property were assessed for resumption for other purposes, I doubt whether the owner would get the value that the improvements represent to him. The New Zealand Act provides that the owner shall receive a 10 per cent. increase on the value made by the Land Valuation Board, but there is a further provision setting forth that in determining the sum to be paid by way of compensation, the court shall have regard not only to the value of the land, but also to the loss, if any, caused to the owner's business as a result of the resumption. Thus, New Zealand allows not only the 10 per cent., but also compensation for deprivation of the property. An amendment will be tabled to cover that point. I do not agree with much that has been said, even by members on this side of the House. A lot of men are holding land and are not doing their duty to the State. We require a Closer Settlement Act to make them do the duty they should have done before.

Mr. Latham: Where is that land?

Hon. S. W. Munsie: There is any amount of it in the York district.

Mr. LINDSAY: The member for York knows where it is.

Mr. Latham: You could have every bit in the York district.

Mr. LINDSAY: The member for York definitely stated last session that there was land around York that should be taken for closer settlement.

Mr. Latham: Refer to "Hansard" and see whether that is true.

Mr. LINDSAY: I am somewhat afraid of the proposed board. Subclause 2 of Clause 3 states that land shall be deemed

unutilised and unproductive if in the opinion of the board it is not put to reasonable use. The board is to consist of an officer of the Lands Department and an officer of the Agricultural Bank, together with a resident of the district to be appointed from time to time. Thus two of the three members of the board will be Government employees, and it is natural to conclude that they will carry out the wishes of the Government.

The Minister for Lands: How can they carry out the wishes of the Government if there is a right of appeal.

Mr. LINDSAY: The owner will have no right of appeal. Provision is made that the board shall take evidence on oath and give a decision, but an owner who considers he is utilising his land should have the right of appeal.

Mr. Latham: He has the right of appeal under Clause 8.

Mr. LINDSAY: I had not noticed that.

Mr. Latham: It is a very good provision for appeal.

Mr. LINDSAY: There is another point as to resuming the whole of the land. There is nothing in the Bill to stipulate that the owner may reserve any portion of it.

The Minister for Lands: If you are going to provide that, you may as well throw out the Bill.

Mr. LINDSAY: All the Acts in other States make that provision.

The Minister for Lands: Those Acts deal with all land; this Bill deals only with unutilised land.

Mr. LINDSAY: The owner should have the right to retain a portion of his holding. A man who has pioneered land and made a home for his family should have the right to retain a portion of the holding, provided the board agrees. That is not much to ask.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. LINDSAY: Before tea I was discussing the question of the appointment of a board to decide whether land shall be deemed to be unutilised and unproductive. I suggested there was no method providing for an appeal against the decisions of that board. I was told by members that there was such a right in the Bill. Certain clauses of the Bill provide for compensation under the Arbitration Act and the Public Works Act. Another portion of it deals with the question of default by the owner after notification and subdivision for sale. If the owner does not subdivide after agreeing to do so within a certain time, the board may deal with the matter and the owner may appeal to the Supreme Court. There is nothing in the Bill providing for an appeal against the decision of the board, which will consist of a member of the Agricultural Bank, the Lands Department, and a private individual. What we are asking for is only a just request. There is a right of appeal from the decision

of any lower court to a higher court, and the same principle should appertain in respect to this Bill. We do not want to create extra expense. It may not be possible for an owner to bring all his witnesses before the board. He may think he has put up a good enough case without going to the trouble of getting witnesses. If the board decide against him, he may have fresh evidence to produce, and should have the right of appeal.

Mr. Latham: He might go on for ever on those lines.

Mr. LINDSAY: On these grounds, I hold that he should have the right of appeal. This Bill is different from the other that Parliament had to deal with. It includes conditional purchase land as well as freehold. It has been suggested that conditional purchase land should be exempt, because of the existence of a contract between the Government and the holder. There is also a contract so far as the owner of freehold land is concerned. He agreed to do certain things, and because he did them he got his freehold. I do not think there is any more likelihood of a contract being broken in respect of conditional purchase land than in respect of freehold. A good deal of the conditional purchase land is not utilised to its full capacity, and should be brought under the Bill.

Mr. Latham: There is already provision in the Land Act for that.

Mr. LINDSAY: It is a pity the provisions of the Land Act are not made more strict than they are. It is also stated that the landowner should be allowed to hold a sufficient area so that his children may have some of it when they grow up. If that is allowed the original selector should announce beforehand how many children he is going to have, so that he will ensure getting enough land. The country cannot be held up until the children grow up before it is improved. It is not right that people should hold their properties in an unproductive state for an indefinite period. The member for Claremont (Mr. North) suggested that by the policy of closer settlement we might destroy the sheep-raising industry. He appears to think that sheep can be raised only on large holdings. If the land were subdivided into smaller holdings, and the plough judiciously used, and sheep feed grown, the country would be carrying more sheep than it is doing today.

Mr. Latham: Is that the only reason why we have not so many?

Mr. LINDSAY: It would also carry more settlers. My reason for supporting the Bill is that very often a man holding a fairly large acreage can make a living out of a few sheep and the green timber on his land, and does not go to the trouble of putting it to its full use. That is not in the best interests of the State. If a man had less land, and improved it by using the plough, and if he were within a reasonable rainfall area and fairly adjacent to the

railway, he would get more out of his land than he does to-day. I venture to say that he could carry five sheep where he is only carrying one. I was elected to this House chiefly on the votes of land holders, for very few other people voted for me. I have, therefore, not been elected to do the land holders any harm, but to see that they get a fair deal. In the first place, however, I believe I was elected to see that the country had a fair deal. It is in the interests of the State that our occupied lands should be producing to their full capacity, and I, therefore, support the Bill subject to the small amendments that will be moved in Committee.

Mr. GRIFFITHS (Avon) [7.35]: After listening to the various speeches I have come to the conclusion that the general feeling is that a Bill of this nature is required. A great deal has been said, however, with which I cannot agree. It has been said that there is no land available for closer settlement along the Avon Valley. This valley extends a long distance. Those who made that statement were to a certain extent justified. As one proceeds along the railway line through the York district, and on towards Beverley, one sees a good deal of country that is very nice in appearance. It is, however, backed up by a lot of stony hills, which would be unsuitable for closer settlement.

Mr. Latham: Or for the plough.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Yes. There are some properties that would not be suitable for closer settlement. One estate that, I think, belonged to Sir Walter James, and was purchased and subdivided by the Government, contains a number of settlers, many of whom are doing well. Quite close to the York boundary and adjacent to the suburban areas, there is an estate of about 11,000 acres, but I do not know whether it is suitable for closer settlement. It would on the whole be wrong to say that all this country is suitable for this purpose until a proper classification had been made. The member for Beverley (Mr. C. P. Wansbrough) said that Mr. William Parker's estate comprises about 4,000 acres, and that of Mr. James Parker about 7,000 acres, and that a large proportion of these properties is unfit for closer settlement. The land was originally offered to the Government for 17s. 6d. an acre, and to-day it can be purchased for about £3 10s. an acre. At Pingelly there are farmers who have told me that the solution of the problem of closer settlement lies in the establishment of the silo system. Messrs. Howe and Sons have erected three silos on their farm, and are now carrying three sheep where they only carried one. They admit they have too much land, and would be prepared to get rid of some of it. This is one direction in which closer settlement might be encouraged in these areas. On the map I could point to such country as that around Chidlow's Well and Baker's

Hill and along the Midland railway which may or may not be suitable for closer settlement. The Midland Railway Company and Mr. S. W. Copley are shown on the map I have here as being the holders of a large area of country, comprising nearly a third of that on the map. Very little of it is occupied, but I am told that a good deal of it is stony and poison country.

Mr. Holman: There is some good timber on it.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: There is a good deal of fine country in it and many fertile gullies. At Mr. Copley's place sultanas as fine as any grown in the State have been produced. Across the railway line to the north there is another big tract of Midland country, but very little has been done with it. Between the York-road and the railway there is a big belt of country suitable for closer settlement and adjacent to a railway. Areas of this description might be classified or brought in as being suitable for the purpose we have in view. Some parts of them, however, may be unsuitable. Portion may do for fruit growing, and farther to the east, towards the cereal country, might be used for some other purpose. One of the big problems in the matter is in connection with our light lands. That is a greater problem than is that of the land lying adjacent to existing railways. In my territory I cannot say there is much country that would be suitable for closer settlement. Within six miles of Cunderdin there is a large property owned by Messrs. Shields and Lalor, absentees. It comprises about 13,000 acres. There is another estate of about 23,000 acres some eight or ten miles south of Doodlakine. Beyond these there is a lot of light country. The main thing in appointing a tribunal to value land or fix the amount of compensation is to ensure that it is composed of competent men. The principle appears to have worked all right in New Zealand, and if the principles of the New Zealand Act were embodied in the Bill it might be better than it is at present. I have no desire to give a silent vote, and will support the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. BROWN (Pingelly) [7.43]: It is strange that in a country like this there should be such a large amount of virgin land, and that it should be thought necessary to introduce a Bill such as the one now before us. According to our population we have more miles of railway than any other State in Australia, and these extend over a great distance. Naturally the thought that will arise in the minds of many members is, how is it that we are not utilising to their utmost capacity those lands that lie adjacent to the railways? The Government are going to be greatly disappointed in the results from this measure. Speaking of the area I know, from Spencer's Brook to Katanning, I say that

when the board inspect the properties there they will find very little ground that is not improved and utilised. Western Australian land is of a very patchy nature. In fact, this State needs to be placed under the zone system. We have our mixed farming districts, and our wheat districts, and our pastoral districts spreading to the North. In the country along the Great Southern railway years ago our wheat yields were pretty good, but now we find those yields decreasing, for the simple reason that the land is becoming wheat-hungry. Every practical farmer knows that in such circumstances there is no alternative but to cultivate every four years. As soon as the farmer comes to that method, he needs a considerable area to make his farming pay. Those are the conditions which the board under this Bill will find when they go along the Great Southern railway. However, I favour the Bill, and will give my reasons. A couple of years ago we at Pingelly formed ourselves into a committee, being of opinion that there was an area of ground along the Hotham River and adjacent to the railway that was suitable for closer settlement. The committee sent a deputation to wait on Sir James Mitchell, and the case the committee put before him was undoubtedly, as the then Premier told us, an excellent one. However, we heard nothing more of the matter, the reason, as I have found out since, being that under the migration scheme land cannot be bought for migrants, because it has to be given to them free. The then Premier had no power to acquire land under a measure for closer settlement. My reason for believing that the present Government will be disappointed with the results from the Bill is that the land required does not exist in the good areas. It is useless to settle people on poor land; they must be given a certain proportion of good land. The proper method of achieving closer settlement is to repurchase estates, and possibly a measure empowering the State to do this exists already. Again, there is a possibility that the present Ministry have up their sleeves a project for acquiring land by way of heavy taxation. In a new country there is always a tendency for ground to pass into large holdings. That is the case in my district, which is passing into larger holdings year by year. Of the original settlers some do well and others do not. The latter look for an opportunity to sell out, and most likely their properties are purchased by their neighbours. In the Pingelly district, which is typical of the Great Southern districts, there are now one-third fewer people farming than there were ten years ago, simply as the result of neighbours buying each other out. At the present prices of sheep and wool a man soon realises what he can make most money out of. Accordingly, many farmers are now turning their attention to growing wool and mutton instead of cereals. That is another reason

why our lands are passing into large holdings. People along the Great Southern railway will not go in for dairying, although the land is suitable for it. However, there is a certain amount of hard work attached to dairying, and many a farmer has said to me, "I will not allow my daughter to go into a cow-yard." But necessity may drive the farmers into dairying. There is always a good demand for butter, and with silos one can preserve enough fodder, probably, to enable one to milk cows all the year round. Undoubtedly there is suitable land for dairying along the Great Southern railway. One dangerous feature of this Bill is the provision for a board of valuers. The idea seems to be to have three valuers: one an official of the Agricultural Bank, one a surveyor, and one a man who understands the land and the methods of the particular district. That is where the danger will come. The two Government officials will be permanently on the board. They are supposed to understand thoroughly every acre of land held and every method of farming practised in all parts of the State. The third member of the board may understand his particular district, but he will be out-voted by the other two members. There will be great danger unless the other two members of the board are good practical men. It may be contended that two better men could not be got than an officer of the Agricultural Bank and a surveyor for determining whether land is being utilised adequately. I may say that many land owners will welcome this Bill, because they have properties which they will be only too glad to offer to the Government without any inspection at all. Two-thirds of such properties may probably not be suitable for closer settlement at all, but under the Bill the Government must buy the entire property or let it alone. The South-West is eminently suitable for closer settlement, but the land in the dryer areas is unsuitable because in that country the settler requires a considerable area in order to make a living. When I was on the deputation to Sir James Mitchell I was asked by many men in Perth, "Do you mean to say a man can make a living on 500 acres in the Pingelly district, when farmers there are selling out every day and the land is passing into large holdings?" My reply was, "Yes, if the necessity arises a man can make a living on 500 acres." When the Committee stage is reached we of this party will probably have some suggestions to offer to the Government. I honestly hope the measure will pass.

Mr. KENNEDY (Greenough) [7.54]: I welcome the Bill, and I commend the Minister for Lands and the Government for having brought it down so early in the session. The objection of some hon. members to the measure appears to be that it will prove slow and cumbersome, and that

a Bill for land taxation should have been introduced first. The latter Bill, I say, would also prove slow and cumbersome, and would not meet the Government's desires as expressed in the present measure. In the Greenough electorate there are large estates, within 20 miles of Geraldton, owned by a few men who would be willing to pay a heavy land tax in order to retain their lands unused rather than bring them into productivity. The member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. George) stressed the desirableness of large holdings so that the owners might make provision for their sons. While the Government are also desirous of promoting settlement, they contend that it is disadvantageous to the State if large areas of first-class land are kept idle pending sons coming of age. Again, small farmers are also anxious to provide blocks of land for their sons; but the only land offering for their purposes is outback. The young fellows would have to go out into the area of declining rainfall. This should not be the case while huge areas of land near at hand are lying idle. The estates in the Greenough electorate to which I have referred are owned by six persons, and comprise from 80,000 to 100,000 acres. Those squatters are running only a few sheep, and by way of experiment a few deer and mules. If the area were brought into productivity, it would furnish homes for approximately 100 families, thus proving of great advantage to the State. Moreover, the Government are spending a large sum of money in Geraldton on harbour construction. Unless the sole object of that expenditure is to build a harbour as an ornament to the State, the Government should not allow the large tract of land to which I have alluded to lie idle any longer. Many years ago the Oakabella and Mt. Erin estates were subdivided for closer settlement, and the Geraldton district prospered much from that fact. It meant that the Northampton railway had to provide larger trains and heavier engines to cope with the increasing traffic. It also meant the construction of another railway, from Geraldton to Yuna. That is how the Geraldton district prospered from the opening of those lands. Geraldton has a butter factory which is practically a white elephant. The factory was built only a few years ago, and a large amount of Government money was expended on it, and to-day it is lying idle. If the large tracts of land adjacent to Geraldton were opened up by a closer settlement scheme, the factory would be an asset to Western Australia as a whole and to the port of Geraldton in particular. It is desirable that this Bill should receive the close attention of hon. members.

Mr. LATHAM (York) [7.58]: I shall support the second reading of the Bill, but

I wonder what effect the measure will have after it becomes law, if it does become law. There is very little land along the Avon Valley not available to the Government to-day if they wish to purchase it. Moreover, by approaching the owners the Government would get that land on better terms than those on which they would obtain it under this Bill. An hon. member a little while ago mentioned the Gwambygine estate, which was subdivided. There is also the Cold Harbour estate, which, too, was cut up for closer settlement. In each case the land has drifted back into the hands of one or two men. After we have passed this measure, if we pass it, we shall have to pass yet another to prevent men from repurchasing properties re-acquired by the Government and then sold by the Government. Along the Eastern Goldfields line the more prosperous farmers are continually enlarging their holdings. There is nothing to prevent them from doing so. No sooner is an estate subdivided, than the settlers on it begin to buy blocks from one another.

Member: There is also the Mt. Hardy estate.

Mr. LATHAM: Yes; the Government purchased that property some years ago, and now every bit of it has reverted to two men. If we have to make provision for the subdivision of areas, let us make provision also that the subdivisions shall not revert again to big holdings. When I first went to York I had an idea that there were considerable areas that could be subdivided. I am still of that opinion, but I do not know that the Bill will have the effect we desire. Take the Hawkhurst estate that changed hands the other day; that estate was available to the Government. After purchasing estates great care must be taken in selling them again. We need only go through the list of properties purchased at very reasonable prices for the returned soldiers, to see how highly over-capitalised they are now, and how necessary it is that the Government shall write down the cost of many of those holdings. The Minister for Lands knows something about the Kuminia station property. I understand that the Minister will be approached shortly with a request to write down the capital cost of the blocks there.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That property was bought cheaply.

Mr. LATHAM: It has been a most expensive property.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What was given for it?

Mr. LATHAM: I do not know the figure, but the settlers there will never make a success while they have to shoulder their present burden.

The Minister for Lands: Are soldier settlers on those blocks.

Mr. LATHAM: Yes.

The Minister for Lands: A committee will deal with them.

Mr. LATHAM: The Minister will be approached regarding this matter, and, to be fair to the settlers, he will have to do something for them. When the land was sold, it was overrun with rabbits; there were many stony patches, and there were noxious weeds there as well. I wish to emphasise the point that great care must be taken to see that adjoining settlers do not buy up the blocks after the subdivision has taken place. We must also see that the men who take up the blocks have a reasonable opportunity to make good. We should not handicap the men for all time, and we should see that they have proper tenure respecting their properties.

Mr. George: You should give them security of tenure.

Mr. LATHAM: This is experimental legislation such as was introduced in New Zealand, where, however, it was found necessary to alter it.

The Minister for Railways: Security of tenure!

Mr. George: There is no security of tenure to-day.

Mr. LATHAM: I do not know that success will attend the operations of the Bill. In this State we have large areas of land adjacent to railways and those areas are not being used. Those areas are owned by the Crown. If we were to devote our attention a bit more to the question of utilising the light lands adjacent to our railways, it would be rendering important service to the State.

Mr. Griffiths: I have got another recruit!

Mr. LATHAM: I do not know that the hon. member has had any experience with the light lands!

Mr. Griffiths: No one knows more about the light land than I do, or has been over more of those areas than I have.

Mr. LATHAM: I went over millions of acres of the light land for the Government on one occasion.

The Minister for Lands: Sir James Mitchell took us over a lot of it once.

Mr. LATHAM: We should devote attention to these light lands. They are adjacent to railways, and water supplies and roads are already provided. If we adopted that course instead of dabbling with this sort of legislation, we would be doing something for the State. During the debate there have been several references to the statement made by Mr. Lefroy, the departmental surveyor, to the effect that there were 2,000,000 acres of unutilised land along the Avon Valley. I have been wondering where those two million acres have got to.

The Minister for Railways: Mr. Lefroy was there for months trying to find out.

Mr. LATHAM: I am glad the Minister used the word "trying"—

The Minister for Lands: Mr. Lefroy is one of our principal officers, and a good one, too.

Mr. LATHAM: I am not doubting that at all.

The Minister for Lands: He would not present a report that was not true.

Mr. LATHAM: Perhaps he referred to the jarrah country on the western side.

The Minister for Railways: You can see the plan for yourself.

Mr. LATHAM: I do not know where he could find any such land within 12 miles of the railway.

The Minister for Lands: He said seven miles, not 12 miles.

Mr. LATHAM: Then I defy him to substantiate that statement.

The Minister for Railways: That statement has been before us for some years. Why did you not adopt that attitude before?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Some men have not eyes to see.

Mr. LATHAM: I challenge hon. members to go to York and investigate the position.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: York is not the only place in the State.

Mr. LATHAM: Well, then, I invite hon. members to go to the Avon Valley. They will find there, on the western side, owners who would be willing to give land to any hon. member who would like to take it up, in order to ascertain what is necessary to bring those areas into productivity. I would next draw attention to the provision made in the Bill for dealing with land held under conditional purchase conditions. The Government have entered into a contract with the purchasers of those areas and they have no right to interfere with those conditions. If the conditions governing those leases have not been complied with, there is sufficient legislation in existence already to enforce compliance. It is the duty of the Minister to see that that is done.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: If those conditions are carried out, is that sufficient in the interests of the State to-day?

Mr. LATHAM: Having entered into a contract with those people, the Government have a right to fulfil their obligations.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: The same applies to freehold.

Mr. LATHAM: I do not know what the conditions applying to freehold may be.

The Minister for Lands: They are the same conditions.

Mr. LATHAM: There are many recruits in this Chamber who are willing to tell a man who has land what he shall do with it, but they do not go on the land themselves.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: If we wanted land, we could not get it to-day.

Mr. LATHAM: Would the hon. member like a 5,000-acre block?

Hon. S. W. Munsie: Yes, very much.

Mr. LATHAM: I think I shall be able to supply the hon. member's wants.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: What about the one block for which there were 83 applicants?

Mr. LATHAM: Of course you will always have a number of applicants for blocks that are available.

The Minister for Railways: How many were after that block at Kalgarin?

Mr. LATHAM: But how many of those men would be prepared to go out and tackle the work? Of course, with the conditions we are offering, there will always be a great number of applicants for blocks because, to the man who secures a block, the State gives at least £1,000. I know that for a fact.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: The sooner you present me with that 5,000-acre block, the better, if £1,000 goes with it.

Mr. LATHAM: There was a reference to the block east of Bengerling. The lucky individual who gets hold of that block will receive a present of £1,000. I know what I am talking about.

Mr. Lindsay: What does the State get for that £1,000?

Mr. LATHAM: I hope it gets a good settler; sometimes it does not. Sometimes the State gets a trafficker in land, and I am not here to defend that sort of person. We make land available under wonderful conditions, but having made the land available, the State should honour its contract. That is why I do not like to see such a clause in the Bill, particularly seeing that there is already legislative machinery to enable the Minister to compel people to comply with the conditions under which the land is taken up. I hope, in Committee, the clause will be deleted.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We will alter that clause.

Mr. LATHAM: I hope so; there is no need for it. I know the Minister will be fair to the State and to the men on the land. If the man has been hampered in the fulfilment of his conditions, I am sure the Government will give him time. I support the Bill but I am afraid it will be a futile piece of legislation. It will not have the effect the Government anticipate. The member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson) suggested that the proper way to go about it was to compulsorily resume land if it was required for closer settlement.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They can do it under the Bill.

Mr. LATHAM: I say they cannot.

The Premier: Of course we can.

Mr. LATHAM: Even so, it will take a long time.

The Premier: Still, we have no other legislation to-day that enables us to do so.

Mr. LATHAM: I agree.

The Premier: That is the object of the Bill.

Mr. LATHAM: I am anxious to see what the result will be.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: Then let us have the Bill and see what the result will be.

Mr. LATHAM: I support the second reading of the Bill, but I do not think it will deliver the goods.

The Minister for Railways: Of course, if you want it more drastic, we will see what can be done.

Mr. LATHAM: I do not think the Bill will do much good.

The Premier: Well, it will not do any harm.

Mr. LATHAM: We should be very careful when dealing with land securities.

The Minister for Lands: The Bill does not affect securities.

Mr. LATHAM: It may.

Mr. Thomson: Or it may not.

Mr. LATHAM: Once we start tinkering with securities, the effect may be adverse to those on the land. Not long ago, when an attempt was made to enforce the regulations under the Land Act, the bankers instantly commenced calling up their money.

Mr. George: And that broke many of the farmers.

Mr. LATHAM: That is so. That emphasises the necessity for great care regarding such legislation.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. W. C. Angwin—North-East Fremantle—in reply) [8.13]: I intended to say I was pleased with the reception the Bill has received, but the blessings on the clauses of the Bill, apart from the Title, make the prospects bad indeed. The member for York (Mr. Latham) pointed out that, before a Bill of this description could be of any use for closer settlement purposes, provision should be made in another Bill to prevent the subdivisional blocks reverting to large holdings. If there is one objection that can be raised to the Bill—it has already been raised, because there is a reference to it on the Notice Paper—it is that we are not dealing entirely with improved lands. We are dealing with lands not utilised and not brought into productivity. The speeches of members sitting on the cross-benches suggested that the Bill dealt with improved properties. Throughout the length of our railway lines, not only in the wheat belt, but also in the South-West, are large areas of land not even cleared, although they have been in the hands of private holders for a number of years. The Bill will give power to the Government to take such lands under certain conditions without financial injury to anybody. If the price of the land cannot be fixed by mutual arrangement, it is to be fixed by arbitration under the Public Works Act; and we know that in almost every instance when prices are fixed by arbitration the owner of the land comes off best.

Mr. Thomson: Not always.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Nearly always. The time may arrive—I hope it will be soon, because it will mean that our population has largely increased—when it will be necessary to deal with improved land, for the reason that some persons will be holding, and perhaps fully working, larger areas of improved land than will be to the advantage of the State. However, that time is not yet. For the present we have sufficient unutilised

land to deal with. That is the land the Bill is aimed at. It is true that many areas of land purchased by one or another Government for subdivision have gone back to large holdings. I believe the Bowes estate, or some other estate in the Victoria district, was twice purchased by the Government. That sort of thing cannot be avoided. However, we are not now legislating against that contingency. We have power to deal with such estates under the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act. There are in that Act compulsory sections; but under that Act the owner can retain so large an area of land that, frequently, the remainder is not worth taking, and so those compulsory sections have remained largely inoperative. The member for Pingelly (Mr. Brown) said the Government might be disappointed. As a matter of fact the Government have been disappointed in many things already, and probably will continue to be disappointed. The ex-Premier was disappointed on two occasions when this Bill failed to become law.

Mr. Latham: Some alterations have been made.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Only minor alterations. In amending the Bill I took the easiest route, the one I thought might get us through. I amended only one or two clauses, because I knew that members opposite could not oppose their own Bill. The member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. George) said we would not dare to tell any working man that he had no right to be a painter or a carpenter or a plumber, notwithstanding which we proposed to tell the people on the land that they could not be farmers, and would have to get out. He added that that was not in the best interests of the State. I could understand that coming from some other member. But the member for Murray-Wellington on two occasions sat here, on the front Ministerial bench, a member of the Government that introduced a Bill almost identical with this, and on neither occasion did he dare say that the Bill was against the best interests of the State.

Mr. Latham: You would not expect him to do so while he sat there.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, but had I been in his place I should have done it, even though it involved giving up this seat and taking another. In a member who could sit silent when his Government introduced the same measure in 1921 and again in the year before last, it is unbecoming to say now that in introducing this legislation we are doing something prejudicial to the State.

Mr. George: A man is entitled to change his views.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member must have changed his very recently, because his Government introduced this Bill, or one almost identical, in 1922. His attitude suggests to me that there is in the Bill something that will be, not prejudicial, but advantageous, to the State; for I cannot be-

lieve that the hon. member would have retained his seat with the Government when they introduced the Bill had he not believed that it would be of benefit to the State. However, he is now in Opposition, and so he finds that any stick is good enough to beat a dog with.

Mr. George: That is not right.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I want to compliment the member for West Perth (Mr. Davy) and assure him that ere long he will have an opportunity to support us in a land taxation measure. I was pleased when, to-night, he approved of closer settlement. He said that to bring about closer settlement it was necessary to have land taxation. In other words he is going to support land taxation.

Mr. Davy: It depends on what sort of a Bill you bring down.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I was basing my remarks on what the hon. member said to-night.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Soon the farmer won't have a feather left to fly with.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member declared that the Bill contained no provision under which the board could enter and inspect a property, or make the necessary inquiry. The hon. member ought to know that there is provision under which inquiry can be made and evidence taken on oath when the board is appointed. The member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) pointed out that there was also provision for making regulations. But then, of course, the member for West Perth does not approve of regulations. Every provision is there for the holding of inquiries as to the use to which land is being put. In either event, there is not in the State an area of agricultural land upon which any man if he so desired could not enter and inspect it, whether he had the right of entry or not.

Mr. Davy: The board cannot call evidence until they have first formed their opinion.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is not so. Every provision for the holding of an inquiry will be found in the Bill. The Government have no desire, any more than had the late Government, to take improved land being put to reasonable use. There is no necessity to do that. But there is necessity to deal with large areas of land adjacent to railways in order that that land might be brought into a more highly productive state and so provide more traffic for the railways than can be expected of sheep, more employment than can be given by sheep, and, above all, more inducement for an increased number of people to come to the State. Expert farmers on the Opposition cross-benches have declared that the cultivating of land enables it to carry more sheep than will land dedicated exclusively to pasture. There are to-day more sheep south of Geraldton than north of that port; and the number to the south is con-

tinnally increasing, owing to the fact that the southern land is steadily being brought into better use. When to-night I heard members speak of the quality of land, of huge areas that would not carry any large numbers of stock, of huge areas not fit for cultivation, my mind went back 30 years to the time when first I came to the State. In those days we heard nothing else about Western Australian lands. When first I was made Honorary Minister to assist the member for Mt. Margaret (Mr. Taylor), who was then Colonial Secretary, Western Australian flour was refused in the North-West, because it was said it would not keep. In those days there was, outside of Northam, no Western Australian land that was any good. Yet it has since been demonstrated that Western Australia has some of the best wheat land in the Commonwealth, and experts have declared that the time is not far distant when Western Australia will be the greatest wheat producing State in this Continent. So what is the use of crying stinking fish merely because a little Bill comes in with the object, not of taking land from people who wish to use it, but of trying to bring under cultivation enormous areas of land not utilised to-day? That is the whole object of the Bill. A good deal has been said about land offered to the ex-Premier for fruit-growing purposes. It has been complained that the then Premier declined to take that land. Having regard to the position in respect of fruit to-day, it is seen to have been a good thing that the ex-Premier held his hand. There are in the Swan district 60 tons of raisins as good as any grown in any part of the world, but unfortunately there is no market for them. The Industrial Council have recommended the provision of machinery that would enable those raisins to be used in this State and in the Eastern States, not as dried table fruit, but in confectionery. So, seeing the way the fruit market has gone, it has been a good thing that the ex-Premier did not agree to develop those fruit-growing areas. I hope the position will improve later on, but it was pointed out definitely by the Overseas Settlement Delegation that it would be unprofitable for a considerable time to encourage migrants to engage in fruit growing. They recommended that migrants be put to dairying, and they quoted the statements of officers of New South Wales, California and other parts of the world in support of their recommendation.

Mr. Sampson: Efforts made in Victoria to increase the consumption of raisins have proved highly successful and similar efforts are to be made here.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson) estimated that the period required to effect resummptions would be 23 months and said it was too long. I interjected that he might have added another month.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Had I done so, I would have been a month out.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I compliment the hon. member on having taken my advice, because the amendment he has indicated will involve another month. It is impossible to subdivide land in a day or a week. Surveyors must examine, classify and subdivide it, after which plans must be prepared before it can be placed on the market. Reasonable time is necessary and no undue delay will occur under the Bill. I admit that in one respect we have provided for one month more than was proposed in the previous Bill. The Government felt that in view of the train service and the mails, two months instead of one month should be allowed for lodging an appeal. Much has been said about the Avon Valley, but I am of opinion that this measure will be applied more in the South-West portions of the State than in the wheat areas. In the South-West are large areas running from 2,000 to 5,000 or 6,000 acres when 160 or 170 acres is sufficient for any man. The member for Beverley (Mr. C. P. Wansbrough) said there was no land in the Avon Valley that could be cut up for closer settlement—there was too much rock on it—and he said he was at a loss to understand where the surveyor got his figures. The Leader of the Opposition said the Avon Valley did not contain so large an area as had been contended. The member for York (Mr. Latham) said the same thing. The Leader of the Opposition is of opinion that Northam is the Avon Valley; the member for Beverley thinks Beverley is the Avon Valley, and the member for York thinks York is the Avon Valley.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No, I don't, but you think Fremantle is the universe.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There is a certain area that has always been known in the Lands Department as the Avon Valley. It includes not only the river, but its main tributaries.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There are not any.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It runs as far east as Dalbelling on the Quairading railway, Meckering on the eastern railway, and then due north to Kalguddering on the Wongan Hills line. I am assured by the Surveyor General that the surveyor devoted weeks to classifying the country, and that this area is what is termed by the Lands Department the Avon Valley.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It has never been termed the Avon Valley.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Surveyor General ought to know. Let me quote the report of the Surveyor.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: When was it written?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: On the 29th April, 1921. It reads—

The schedule, page 17, shows the results of the classification of the 2,328,410 acres within seven miles radii of the Avon Valley railway system. These figures disclose the fact that there are 61,580 acres

of uncleared first class grade A land, 141,510 acres of uncleared first class B land, and 210,570 acres of uncleared first class C land.

These are lands that are generally termed by the department first class lands. They may vary a little in value.

Of this latter area probably only half is suitable for cultivation owing to its hilly nature. The total of the three grades of uncleared first class land is 404,660 acres. The position of this first class land is shown in red on a plan of the agricultural classification in my possession, and indicates the possibility of establishing at least 400 new settlers within the limits of the 2,000,000 odd acres in the agricultural classification of the Avon Valley so far dealt with.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is not the Avon Valley at all.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Surveyor General assures me that it is. The report continues—

In January, 1920, I recommended that power be obtained by Act of Parliament for the State to acquire land under lease, with the right of purchase, with the object of providing the means whereby the huge area of undeveloped land within seven miles of the existing railway system throughout the wheat belt may be developed. As about 36 per cent. of the classified area referred to above, which has been selected for a period of well over 50 years, is undeveloped in an agricultural sense, and as there is probably an area of 7,000,000 acres of similar land in the 10,000,000 acres unclassified within seven miles of the existing railways through the wheat belt, these 7,000,000 acres will provide 3,500 individual farms of 2,000 acres each, which is amply sufficient to enable an equal number of additional settlers to be placed on the country referred to. This improved state of affairs would produce a very marked effect on the general prosperity of the State, and justifies action on the lines I have indicated, viz., for the State to acquire the power to lease the land, with the right of purchase, with the object of enabling well-to-do land selectors to acquire and develop the same, thereby introducing a system of share farming by an inexpensive method, as the scheme recommended can be made to finance itself. (Sgd.) J. H. M. Lefroy, District Surveyor, Perth.

That is the surveyor who classified the land.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No, he sent men out.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He has been over the country.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I know better.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In a summary he shows that 36 per cent. of the first class land, 64 per cent. of the second class land and 88 per cent. of the third class land in this district is uncleared.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is of no use clearing the third class land.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is the position in the wheat belt, without mentioning the South-West.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Did you say there are 2,000,000 acres uncleared and unused?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, I said that in the 2,000,000 odd acres there is a possibility of establishing 400 new settlers.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I daresay there is.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Some of this land has been held unutilised for the last 50 years.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No fear!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I was not here then, but that is what the surveyor says. Is it not time that such land within seven miles of our railway system was used in preference to settling people 25 miles from a railway as we have been doing? Are we not justified in introducing a Bill to bring this land into use? The member for Pingelly (Mr. Brown) raised a good point when he said we in Western Australia have a greater mileage of railway in proportion to population than has any other State. There is not a farmer in this State but is paying more for the carriage of his produce on account of there being so much idle land adjacent to our railways. The Agent General is hoping that as a result of the Wembley Exhibition and of lectures he and others have given there, we shall be able to attract to Western Australia, at an early date, men of capital who will be able to take up this land and develop it. Since I have been in office I have approved of the throwing open of numerous areas for selection, but what are they? Ninety per cent. of them are roads that have been closed. I say without fear of contradiction that our land officers could not tell an applicant where there is one farm within reasonable distance of a railway. I know there is plenty of land elsewhere.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They said that in 1909.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Things are different now. There are some reserves on which the officials are sneaking day by day to get a little land, but in the wheat belt there is no land available within reasonable distance of a railway. It is useless to try to deceive people. On the other hand, we have so many million acres undeveloped. Throughout Australia people are crying out for land. The other day the Minister for Mines showed me a photograph taken in New South Wales of persons who had gone to get some land that was thrown open for selection, each of whom had £500 with which he was pre-

pared to start development. Included in that photograph are scores of persons hunting for land. In this State as many as 92 people have applied for one block, and yet we are asked to stay quiet and leave the land alongside our railways undeveloped, and do nothing to advance the prosperity of the State. This is a clear argument against the construction of more railways. It shows clearly that the action taken years ago was wrongly taken. We have been building railways before they are required, and in areas in advance of settlement. The system that prevailed in those days, however, was such that it could not be avoided. Not long ago I received a deputation connected with the Avon Valley. It was pointed out that there were several large holdings there which the State should procure for closer settlement.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Very few are large holdings.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Will the hon. member say there are no large holdings around Toodyay?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There are very few.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Very many.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I have lived there and I know.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In a place like Toodyay there are schools of the very latest type, and conveniences that cannot be beaten anywhere in the State. It should be one of the biggest and most flourishing towns in the State, on account of the quality of the land, and yet we find it is not being utilised because it is in the hands of a few people. When the Avon Valley deputation waited on me I had presented to me some fruit that had been dried, and was being sold in the shops at Toodyay. I put it into the exhibition at Fremantle. It had not been there long before I was asked where it came from. The people who asked me said they had not seen its equal in any part of the world. Unfortunately, I could not tell them who had grown it. As things are at present these land owners can snap their fingers at the Government, and declare that they will keep their properties until they can get the price they want. With them the State is a secondary consideration. If the Bill is passed, and the Government are given the power sought, to use it if they so desire, they can take that land and subdivide it.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Why not put the Bill through? We might have had it through long ago.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I know all about that. I do not think I will say much more.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You have said too much already.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Possibly. When we reach the committee stage I ask members not to put anything into the Bill that will spoil its effect. They must not think it is the intention of the Government at this juncture to deal with improved land, or to take a man from his farm, on which he is making his living, and put someone else in his place. I assure members that the Government have not the money with which to buy out these people, and do not intend to do so.

Mr. George: Would you do so if you had the money?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If it was to the advantage of the State.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: Look at the power we are giving you.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We have not the money to do this, and have no intention of doing it. I wish to refer to the 10 per cent. question. Just now I dealt with improved land, and pointed out that the question of improvements could be settled by arbitration, failing a mutual agreement being arrived at. In the case of unimproved land, who is more likely to place the proper value upon it, the owner or someone else? We say to the owner: "The valuation that you place upon your land shall be prima-facie evidence of its value, and we will give you 10 per cent. in addition."

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: It is not enough.

Mr. George: Unless you leave him some land to live on, what is he to do?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If a person has been valuing his land at too low a figure, he has been robbing the State.

Mr. Taylor: You will wake up soon.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He has not been paying the tax that the honest man has been paying.

Mr. Lindsay: Don't you think the State has the right to put the value on it?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He has been getting an advantage over his neighbour. No one can complain if he receives a price for his land of 10 per cent. over and above his own valuation.

Mr. Thomson: But it is a forced sale.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If I had my way and a man was under-valuing his land, I would take it away from him and not pay him at all.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: And he would have his remedy.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Anyway, my colleagues would not agree to that.

Mr. Taylor: You do not know them.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Premier has reminded me that this would amount to confiscation. I hope the Bill will pass the second reading, and that there will be very few amendments in committee. I will do my best to prevent amendments being made.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

Mr. Lutey in the Chair; the Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—The board:

Mr. THOMSON: I presume it is the intention of the Government that the gentleman with local knowledge who will be appointed to the board will not be a Government servant.

The Minister for Lands: That is not intended.

Mr. THOMSON: I want to have that placed on record.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—Inquiries of board:

Mr. HUGHES: On behalf of the member for Guildford, I move an amendment—

That in sub-clause 2, lines 2 and 3, the words "notwithstanding that such land is partially utilised or productive" be struck out; in the fourth line the words "the land is not put to reasonable use and" be struck out; and in the last line, "and cannot be justified" be struck out.

The desire of the member for Guildford is to make the clause more definite. It does not seem that the words proposed to be struck out are in any way necessary, with the exception, possibly, of the words "and cannot be justified," with the striking out of which I do not altogether agree. It may be argued that they were left in for a particular purpose. The board will determine whether land is being put to a reasonable use or not. The primary question at issue is whether or not the land is wanted for closer settlement. The Bill will not be applied to land that is put to reasonable use, unless it is required for that purpose. With these words struck out it will be quite definite that land that is required for this purpose can be taken by the board.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: On the second reading I pointed out that we have 28,342,629 acres of land, and that most of that area is alienated, or in process of alienation, from the Crown. About 19½ million acres are either unimproved or else used principally for sheep. The idea of this Bill is to get on to those 19½ million acres first. I trust the time will come, a time of greatly increased population, when it will be necessary to deal with some larger holdings which are unimproved. Meantime we have the 19½ million acres to play on first. I hope the amendment will be rejected.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. HUGHES: I move an amendment—

That in Subclause 2 the words "the land is not put to reasonable use and" be struck out.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Those words are necessary to enable the board to

form an opinion. If the land is reasonably used, there is no occasion for the board to take action. But some large areas are used exclusively for sheep; and the board, after taking evidence in the district, might form the opinion that the land could be put to better use, that it is not being used in the best interests of the State. The board should have an opportunity of declaring whether such is the case. I know that difference of opinion may exist regarding the matter, but an opinion can be arrived at only on evidence submitted to the board as the result of inquiries. If the words are deleted, then under this measure land must be regarded as productive as long as a few sheep run on it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I hope the words will be retained. In Western Australia, with 640,000,000 acres and 350,000 people, all the land cannot be put to full use. I wish some hon. members would get out of the city and do some work on the land and increase production. What the deuce do they know about the land? The man on the land has done good work for Western Australia—that man whom this House sometimes discusses so lightly and discourages so readily. If land is being put to any reasonable use—and Heaven knows there is enough land in Western Australia—that should be sufficient. The words are necessary to the clause. Let the mover of the amendment go out into the country and see what men who a few years ago were working on the wharf at Fremantle, have achieved on the land.

Mr. HUGHES: The Opposition Leader has kept men in the city, in that they have not been able to get land to settle on.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Two million acres were taken up last year.

Mr. HUGHES: But only the other day there were 92 applicants for one block of land. It is a fact that city people cannot get on the land. I know of a dozen men who would take a farm to-morrow if they could get one. The essence of the Bill is whether land is required for closer settlement. There is no intention of taking the land without paying compensation. If land is wanted for closer settlement, the board should have power to take it whether it is utilised or not. In that way any contention which might arise from the words my amendment proposes to strike out would be avoided.

Mr. MILLINGTON: I support the amendment. The board would have sufficient power under the clause as amended, because they would have to show that the retention of the land by the owner would be a hindrance to closer settlement. It would be difficult to prove that the land was not put to reasonable use.

Mr. THOMSON: I hope the Committee will not agree to the amendment. The basis of the board's determination is to be that the land is not put to reasonable use.

We should not let this be a matter of opinion only; the board have to justify their report to the Minister.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. DAVY: I do not wish to be regarded as raising frivolous objections, but I contend there is a serious omission from the clause. There is no provision empowering the board to go on a man's land and make inquiries to enable them to arrive at a conclusion as to whether the land is put to proper use and so forth. The Minister for Lands has suggested that Clause 4 provides the board with power to take evidence on oath. That evidence is from men who have to defend their rights. The board have to make their inquiries and report to the Minister before the powers conferred upon them by Clause 4 can operate.

The Minister for Lands: The power to take evidence does not apply to those who have to defend their rights alone; there is no limitation.

Mr. DAVY: No, the only evidence that can be taken on oath is that of persons affected. The board has no power to enter on land or to make inquiries as to the use to which it is put, and so forth, all of which is relevant to the question whether the land is utilised, is productive, and is put to reasonable use. Without having that power the board have to come to a decision that will cause an investigation to be held at which persons will have an opportunity to defend themselves.

The Minister for Lands: You know the land is classified.

Mr. DAVY: That might get over the difficulty as to the quality of the land, but it would not help in arriving at a conclusion as to whether the land was put to reasonable use. The Minister suggested that the defect could be cured by way of regulation. It would be a terrible thing if such an important alteration of the law were made by way of regulation. I doubt whether such a regulation enabling persons to enter upon land without the permission of the owner would stand a test in any court of law.

The Minister for Railways: The board make the inquiry and put the owner on the defensive.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Under Clause 3 the board will inquire as to the use made of the land. By means of the classification sheets they know the quality of the land, and information to show what the land should produce under proper methods of cultivation is also available. The board has power to take evidence on oath from anyone.

Mr. Davy: If no one volunteers to give evidence the board will have nothing before them.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Under Clause 4 the board have to report to the Minister, and it is then that action is taken. The Minister can then notify the owner,

who may lodge an objection, and the board can make further inquiries.

Mr. Davy: No, that takes place before that stage.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: At any rate, I will make inquiries, and if it is necessary to safeguard the position, I will do so.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 4—Board to report to Minister:

Mr. THOMSON: I move an amendment—

That a proviso be added to the clause, as follows:—Provided also that any person as aforesaid may, within the prescribed time, appeal from the board to a local court from the opinion of the board that the land is not put to reasonable use and its retention by the owner is a hindrance to closer settlement and cannot be justified, and the decision of the local court shall be final.

The owner should have the right to receive a copy of the report made by the board to the Minister. The right of appeal is conceded respecting the assessment of compensation. A man may put his land to what years of experience have proved to be the most profitable way of utilising the holding. The board may not regard that as utilising the land within the meaning of the Act. From that decision the appeal could be to the local court.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I cannot agree to the amendment. It has the appearance of merely defeating the whole object of the Bill.

Mr. Thomson: That is not the intention.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not say it is. The board have to make inquiries before anything is decided regarding the compulsory resumption of the land. The board, apart from the local man, consists of two departmental officials who would have no interest in the matter at all. The appeal suggested in the amendment might be to two justices of the peace who might be neighbours of the appellant.

Mr. Thomson: It would be on sworn evidence.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The evidence taken before the board will be on oath.

Mr. Corboy: You wish to appeal from a board of experts to a court of non-experts.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, what would the magistrate know about it? Without any inquiry, we all know of thousands of acres that have not been utilised for over two years. The amendment is not required.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: One of the alterations made in the Bill by the Minister has been the wiping out of the right of appeal.

The Minister for Lands: No. This clause is identical with what you introduced.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No, I have a copy of it here.

The Premier: That is a misprint in the copy you have.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: In the Bill of 1922 there was in Clause 6 provision for appeal. That has been dropped. However, I do not expect the board would do anything unreasonable.

The Minister for Railways: The land to be taken must be obviously unproductive.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, it must be out of use before it can be taken. Still there ought to be provision for appeal.

Mr. THOMSON: I hope the Minister will accept the amendment. In all our courts of justice a man is given the right of appeal.

The Minister for Lands: Do you think the holder would have had the land allotted to him had it been thought he would not utilise it?

Mr. THOMSON: No, but when we are practically confiscating a man's land we should give him the right of appeal.

Mr. Hughes: Why make the local court the final court of appeal?

Mr. THOMSON: Because the local magistrates would have some knowledge of the value of land. Moreover, the cost of going to the local court would be very much less than that of going to the Supreme Court.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The clause is precisely the same as that introduced by the ex-Premier in 1922. It was amended in Committee. There is no reason for an appeal against the findings of the board, because the board will consist of at least two disinterested persons, and in all probability the local man also will be disinterested. The proviso means nothing more nor less than a duplication of work.

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

Ayes	13
Noes	21

Majority against	..	8
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AYES

Mr. Brown	Mr. North
Mr. Davy	Mr. Sampson
Mr. George	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Lindsay	Mr. C. P. Wansbrough
Mr. Mann	Mr. Richardson
Sir James Mitchell	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. McCallum
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Millington
Mr. Coiller	Mr. Munsie
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Pantou
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Heron	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Holman	Mr. A. Wansbrough
Mr. Hughes	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Kennedy	Mr. Withers
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Corboy
Mr. Lamond	(Teller.)

PAIRS.

AYES	NOES.
Mr. Maley	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Barnard	Mr. Marshall

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 5—agreed to.

Clause 6—Notice to owner:

Mr. HUGHES: I ask that the clause be postponed as there are amendments that might well be made.

The Minister for Lands: I wish to go on with the Bill.

Mr. HUGHES: Then I move an amendment—

That subclauses 2, 3, and 4 be deleted.

These subclauses will afford opportunities to obstruct the operation of the measure. After all the other formalities have been complied with, the owner may sit down for three months and do nothing. Then he could give notice of intention to subdivide, and when he submits his scheme to the board there will be further delay. To further hold up the process, the owner, in putting his land up for sale, could demand payment straight away. A majority of people requiring land cannot afford to pay for it immediately, and so these provisions might be made the means of defeating the object of the measure. The delay would probably amount to 12 months at least.

The Minister for Railways: The Crown could hop in and buy it.

Mr. HUGHES: The Crown has no intention of doing so.

The Minister for Railways: The owner would have to sell at a reasonable price.

Mr. HUGHES: What is a reasonable price, and who will interpret it?

The Minister for Railways: The board.

Mr. HUGHES: No, the court will interpret the Act. The object of the Bill is closer settlement, and people who have been holding land unutilised for a long time have received all the consideration they deserve. If the land is wanted in the interests of the State, the owners should not be permitted to hold up process for 12 months. The Bill should say definitely that if land is required it should be made available immediately. Whatever is taken by the State will be paid for in full. As the Minister is determined to push this clause through, I have no other alternative than to move the amendment.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The provision is a good one.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Yes.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It gives the owner the opportunity of subdividing his own land, and saving expense to the Crown. He is given three months in which to do this, not 12 months as stated by the member for East Perth. The object of the Bill is to bring land into cultivation. Not one estate that has been purchased by the

Government has yet been subdivided within six months of acquisition. I cannot see that the clause is in any way detrimental to the Bill, but am rather of opinion that it will be of great advantage to the Government. We want to induce owners to dispose of their own land. Although many people want to settle on the land, they generally ask the Government to put them there. I am anxious to get settlers who have money of their own. At present they generally pass our doors and go to the other States. We cannot expect to go on year after year borrowing money with which to pay interest in connection with land settlement.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There is not much owing.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Only about a million. By this Bill we are giving the owner an opportunity of dealing with his own land, and will possibly render it unnecessary for the State to put up the money required for the purpose. Probably many of the owners will not be willing to subdivide their own land, but will want the State to buy them out.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I support the Minister. We waited for 80 years for men with money to settle here, and we still cannot get enough to eat. Western Australia has for the most part been settled by men without money. If we are going to do anything great in land settlement it must be done with men of that character.

The Premier: We get a sprinkling of the others.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, but it is a slow process, and they do not come here in any numbers. The provision is a good one, and I hope it will be agreed to.

Mr. HUGHES: Many people in the city who wanted land could not get it in the régime of the member for Northam.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They had 2,000,000 acres last year.

Mr. HUGHES: This clause opens the way to a lot of dummying. Land owners will be able to sell to their children, or their relatives, and thus defeat the object of the Bill.

Mr. George: Why should they not sell to their children?

Mr. HUGHES: The hon. member should give his wealth to his children, not sell it to them. I hope my amendment will be agreed to.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 7—Acquisition of land:

Mr. THOMSON: I move an amendment—

That in Subclause 3, at the end of line 5, there be inserted "with a sum not exceeding twenty per centum of such value added thereto."

The object is to compensate the owner of the land for what is termed displacement, and may be termed goodwill. The man being compelled to sell his land, the board should have the right to say to him, "We will give you so and so many per cent. extra for disturbance." I contend ten per cent. is not a sufficient allowance for displacing a man from his land. The member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) said he would be quite willing to give up his business at a valuation with ten per cent. added as representing the goodwill, but I do not think the hon. member would like to be taken at his word, for his business should show him a net return of at least ten per cent. The member for East Perth asserts that it is impossible for applicants to obtain land, and the Minister has stated that there have been 92 applicants for one block. Take the case of a farmer who, by years of hard work, has made a competency for himself and his family: where is he, when dispossessed, to get other land while there are 92 applicants for a single block? The allowance for disturbance should be up to 20 per cent. Business people in the metropolitan area would not take less than 20 per cent. for goodwill. The 20 per cent. in my amendment is not mandatory, and in any case the Government are still protected by the provisions of the Arbitration Act and the Public Works Act.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I regret that I must oppose the amendment. The Bill provides for an allowance of 10 per cent. on the unimproved value of the land, if necessary; but the member for Katanning wants 20 per cent. not only on the unimproved value of the land, but also on the value of the improvements. He speaks of disturbance, but there is no disturbance in respect of land with which the owner is doing nothing. The hon. member further said that not a business man would like to be dispossessed with an allowance of less than 20 per cent. for goodwill. But that would be a live business, while the land would represent a dead business, because the owner of the land is not utilising it. The man who has, say, a thousand acres and is farming them to the best of his ability will not be disturbed. We want to deal with the people who have too much land and cannot bring it to the productive stage. The Bill is, if anything, over-generous, because year after year the State has suffered by reason of people holding land unutilised. The State does not suffer from the utilisation of land, which gives employment. But the holder of unutilised land is holding it for the unearned increment.

Mr. Thomson: But the amendment says not exceeding 20 per cent.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The insertion of the words would amount to an

instruction to the board. The provisions of the Bill are perfectly fair. The measure does not say that the value of the land as stated in the owner's taxation return shall be taken as the price, but merely that such value is to be taken as evidence of the value of the land. I know of land on which taxation has been paid at a high rate because of a belief that the Government would require the land for railway purposes. Therefore the taxation value is not necessarily a low value.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If the Government went on to a farm which is being put to reasonable use and turned the man off it, certainly there ought to be heavy compensation. But 10 per cent. is reasonable in the case of land not fully utilised.

Mr. Thomson: The amendment says not exceeding 20 per cent., and the board would decide.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: One man must be treated like another before the law. The Government must not take land which is being reasonably used. That would achieve no object. The purpose of the Bill is to bring into use land which is not used at all or which is not used reasonably. The member for Katanning appears to think that the Government are going to take farms on which houses have been built and paddocks are cultivated and sheep are being run. If that were done, it would be a different matter and I would agree with the member for Katanning that 20 per cent. would be a reasonable amount if a man's living were taken away from him.

Mr. Thomson: The Minister said there were 19½ million acres of land unimproved or used for sheep only. That shows what is the intention of the Minister.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: A great deal of that land is fenced and watered and sheep are being run there. A large proportion of that land, however, cannot be cropped; it was taken up as third class land. The Minister will probably find there is considerably less land available for subdivision and settlement than he imagined. The amendment suggests that land that is used reasonably is to be taken. That is not the purpose at all.

Mr. TAYLOR: I hope the Committee will not agree to the amendment. The clause is too reasonable altogether. It is time Parliament took a stand against the unearned increment arising from land speculation. The Bill will go some way towards preventing it. It is idle to say that land that is reasonably used will be interfered with by the board. The object of the Bill is to put men on the land who will utilise it reasonably.

Mr. THOMSON: I have no desire to protect a man who has land that is not being used. There are many instances along the Great Southern railway where people took up land 20 years ago and devoted their whole energies to wheat growing. As the years went on they found that wheat growing did not pay. They turned their attention to sheep with the result that they are now getting good returns.

The Minister for Lands: There is some land in that district respecting which the Agricultural Bank will not advance money except for sheep.

The Premier: If the board found that the land was unsuitable for wheat growing they would not resume it for that purpose. The board would allow it to remain as a sheep run.

Mr. THOMSON: Much of the land is used for mixed farming. Land has been offered to the Government that will produce wine of the finest quality.

The Minister for Lands: We do not want wine.

Mr. THOMSON: Mr. W. R. Nairn, who was once a member of this Chamber, said that Piesse's vineyard produced the finest port wine in Australia. In that part of the State, we have grown some of the best raisins and currants produced in Western Australia. Some consideration must be extended to the owners of such areas if their holdings are resumed. In the city areas the resumption of property as well as improvements and disturbance have to be paid for.

The Minister for Lands: You cannot make any comparison along those lines.

Mr. THOMSON: I contend I can. If goodwill is recognised in connection with a city business, the same recognition should be accorded the farmer.

The Minister for Lands: We do not intend to take a farm that is improved or to take a living away from a man!

Mr. THOMSON: The area that may be taken is not specified. I am sorry the Minister objects to the amendment, because we only ask for reasonable compensation. This matter has been discussed by Country Party members, and we want only what is reasonable.

Amendment put and a division taken, with the following result:—

Ayes	5
Noes	29
Majority against				24

AYES.

Mr. Brown
Mr. Lindsay
Mr. Thomson

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough
Mr. Griffiths
(Teller.)

Noss.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Millington
Mr. Chesson	Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Collier	Mr. Munroe
Mr. Coverley	Mr. North
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Pantou
Mr. Davy	Mr. Richardson
Mr. George	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Heron	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Holman	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Hughes	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Kennedy	Mr. A. Wansbrough
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Lamond	Mr. Withers
Mr. Mann	Mr. Corboy
Mr. McCallum	

(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 8 to 12—agreed to.

Clause 13—Power to discharge land from operations of Act:

Mr. DAVY: This clause, taken in conjunction with Clause 6, makes it clear that after the land has been declared subject to the Act and the owner has notified his intention of subdividing, there is no obligation on the board to get on with the work, and so the land may be tied up for an indefinite period. Has the Minister considered that?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member means that there is no provision under which the board has to take action?

Mr. Davy: Nothing to ensure that the board shall push on with the subdivision.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Before the board can take action, they must first have the approval of the Governor in Council. Then action will be taken to acquire the land. Due notice must be given, and there is the possibility that the owner, as soon as he receives the notice, makes a bona fide attempt to improve his holding. Under this clause his land may then be discharged from the operations of the Act. Even today we are continually receiving applications from land holders for time in which to improve their holdings, some of which have been actually forfeited. So long as a man is making a bona fide attempt to improve his holding the Minister, naturally, refrains from exercising his power to take the land. The same practice will be observed under this provision. If a man does not start to improve his holding, or fails to subdivide it, the Governor in Council can take immediate action to resume the land.

Mr. DAVY: If an owner is told what to do and does not do it, he makes default and comes under the resumption provision. An owner, however, may have notified his intention to subdivide and may have submitted a scheme, but there is nothing to ensure that the board will show what surveys they require, or on what terms the property should be offered. Thus, a man's land may be tied up and the whole business left in the air for an indefinite period. It

should be made clear that the board must act within a certain time, failing which their report will be rendered nugatory.

Hon. SIR JAMES MITCHELL: The Government have dropped a clause that appeared in the previous Bill and made this clause necessary. There should be power to discharge land from the declaration because it may be found that an owner has been wrongly notified.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Is it reasonable to believe that the Government would call upon a man to do a certain thing and then take no further action? Of course it is not.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 14, 15—agreed to.

Clause 16—Interpretation:

Hon. SIR JAMES MITCHELL: I move an amendment—

That the words "or leasehold tenure, or under any conditional purchase lease or other contract, except a pastoral lease under Part A. of the Land Act, 1898," be deleted.

I regard a lease as a contract. Subject to certain payments and certain improvements being made, a lessee may enjoy possession of his land.

The Minister for Lands: If those words be struck out, it will not make any difference, because we have already stipulated all land.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I shall adhere to the amendment. I object to the violation of a contract. A sale under conditional purchase provisions is a contract. We have provided that such land may be held for a certain period on certain conditions, but now the Government want to insist upon further work being done. Under the Land Act, if the improvements be not made, the land is forfeitable, but under this measure, the man would be compensated. We should live up to our obligations.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I hope the Committee will not agree to the amendment. This clause was put in for a special purpose. The Bill deals only with certain land, and does not cover pastoral leases. To make it quite clear that it should not do so I added the definition of the term "land." What is the difference in principle between C.P. land and freehold land? In the one case the Government have entered into a contract with a person, who pays them a certain amount of money for land that is there for his own use and sole purpose. In the other case the Government have entered into a contract with a man who, upon carrying out certain improvements and paying a certain sum, also becomes possessed of land that is for his own use and sole purpose. There are many cases of men who hold land that is partly freehold and partly leasehold, but all the improvements may be on the freehold portion. At all events, the amendment is a ridiculous one.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You have no right to say that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If the Leader of the Opposition had not thought there was a difference between the two classes of land a Bill of this nature would have gone through two years ago. The Royal Commission decided that both should be included.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

New clause:

Mr. THOMSON: I move:

That a new Clause be added to stand as Clause 11, as follows:—Owner may retain portion of land intended to be acquired. Notwithstanding anything in this Act to the contrary, any owner who, before a declaration is published under Section seven that land has been taken under this Act, may notify the Board of his desire to retain a portion of the land intended to be taken sufficient for the sustenance of himself and his family; and in such case he shall have the right to retain such portion of the land as may be agreed upon between such owner and the Board or, in case an agreement is not arrived at, as shall be determined by a Local Court, and the decision of the Court shall be final.

It is only reasonable that a man should be allowed to retain enough of his land to enable him to sustain himself upon it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I oppose the new clause. If it were carried it might be possible for a man, whose property was required for subdivisional purposes, to retain the best of it for himself and leave only the poorer portion. I would again point out that the Government do not desire to acquire improved land.

Mr. Thomson: You will take some.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Very little. The more highly land is improved the more expensive will it be to acquire.

Mr. Thomson: But the board might give the owner the poorer part of his land and take only the best of it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No. There would be a fair subdivision.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If the owner of a resumed area wishes to take one of his blocks, and is willing to improve it, he should be given the opportunity to do so. It would save a lot of money, and the owner would be treated with consideration. The clause does not provide for that, but the necessary provision could easily be made without interfering with the Government's intentions. If the member for Katanning will put up the necessary amendment I will support it, but I cannot support his present amendment.

Mr. Griffiths: There should be some protection of this kind for the man who wants land.

Mr. SAMPSON: I see no force in the arguments brought forward in support of the amendment. It is not reasonable to suppose that a man and his wife and children would be sustained as the result of operations upon the small section that would be retained. The amendment is pernicious, and its adoption would certainly not increase the effectiveness of the measure.

Mr. THOMSON: I will accept the last speaker's correction if he can show me where the Bill gives the owner the right to claim part of the land taken from him. My amendment has been put up with a sincere desire to give reasonable protection to those whom this party represent. The Minister's assurance is not worth a snap of the fingers when we are legislating.

New clause put and negatived.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

House adjourned at 11.15 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 2nd September, 1924.

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

QUESTION—ESPERANCE SETTLERS, ASSISTANCE.

Mr. LATHAM asked the Minister for Lands: 1, What was the cost per acre to the settlers for the land put under cultivation by the Government at Esperance for the year 1923-24? 2, What was the return per acre for the above-mentioned area? 3, Is there an indemnity provided by the Treasurer to the trustees of the Agricultural Bank against any loss in this area?