

tion. Regrettable as it is to have to say it, we shall find out whether the thing is good or bad only by trying it; and only by failing shall we be able to find it out. No economist I have ever read but has agreed that it is a false economic principle. Yet the ignorant people—ignorant, I mean, only in this one narrow sense—have decided that it shall be the settled policy of Australia, and in consequence Governments, Ministers and members of Parliament have to carry on the policy. We have for long complimented ourselves on our high standard of living, but it cannot possibly last much longer unless we overturn that great fiscal absurdity, protection. I have pleasure in supporting the motion.

On motion by Hon. C. F. Baxter, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 6.5 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Wednesday, 10th August, 1927.*

|   | PAGE |
|---|------|
| Questions: Taxation allowance ... ..  | 198  |
| Vermoin Act—1, Bonus on wild dogs; 2, Standard fence ... ..                         | 198  |
| Butter preservatives ... ..   | 198  |
| Railways—1, East-West extension to Fremantle; 2, Fruit for refreshment rooms ... .. | 199  |
| Water supply guarantees ... ..  | 199  |
| Leave of absence ... ..   | 199  |
| Address-in-reply, sixth day ... ..  | 199  |

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

### QUESTION—TAXATION, ALLOWANCE.

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Premier: 1, Is he aware that the maintenance allowance for farm hands under the Workers' Compensation Act is 30s., but for taxation purposes only 20s.? 2, Will he instruct the Taxation Department to remedy this anomaly?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (for the Premier) replied: 1, Yes. 2, No, there is no anomaly. The Taxation Department allows taxpayers (employers) the actual

cost of their employees' maintenance where proper accounts are kept, or 20s. per week for maintenance where no accounts are kept. These provisions apply to Federal and State income tax, and have never been objected to by employers or employees.

### QUESTIONS (2)—VERMIN ACT.

#### *Bonus on Wild Dogs.*

Mr. LINDSAY asked the Hon. H. Millington (Honorary Minister): 1, On how many wild dogs was bonus paid? 2, How much was paid for the years 1924-25 and 1925-26?

Hon. H. MILLINGTON replied: 1, 1924-25, 8,910 wild dogs were destroyed, the bonuses for which amounted to £3,219 15s. 2, 1925-26, 6,028 wild dogs were destroyed, the bonuses for which amounted to £2,390 15s.

#### *Standard Fence.*

Mr. RICHARDSON (for Mr. Latham) asked the Hon. H. Millington (Honorary Minister): Will he give detailed specifications of a vermin fence that will satisfy the Chief Inspector and enable him to issue a certificate of exemption from vermin tax?

Hon. H. MILLINGTON replied: The Chief Inspector will grant exemption from the payment of the vermin tax if the fence, as per details hereunder, is erected by the settler:—"A substantial fence with posts not more than 15 feet apart, hung with rabbit-proof netting 42 inches wide, mesh not greater than 1½ inches, and not less than 18 gauge wire, with not less than 6 inches of the netting perpendicular in the ground. Above the rabbit netting sheep or dog netting 3 feet wide to be hung with a final wire, making a total height of six feet. The final two feet of the fence must lean outwards at an angle of 45 degrees.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is not in accordance with the Act.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: It is.

### QUESTION—BUTTER, PRESERVATIVES.

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Health: 1, Has he noticed that Britain has prohibited the sale of butter containing borax or other preservatives? 2, Will he obtain

from the British Ministry of Health the reasons for the new legislation? 3, Do the Health Department believe that the sale of butter containing preservatives is having a bad effect upon the health of the people in this State?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH replied: 1, Yes. 2, The chief reasons which brought about the prohibition—(a) that butter could be marketed in a wholesome condition without the aid of preservatives if proper methods of manufacture were adopted; (b) that the unnecessary use of preservative was not in the best interests of either the producer or consumer. 3, It is generally recognised that the use of preservatives must interfere somewhat with the digestive juices, and that wherever possible food should be supplied in its natural state. The Department consider that unless the use of preservative is absolutely essential, then it should not be permitted, and further, that it should be incumbent upon manufacturers to demonstrate that after the adoption of proper methods of manufacture, the use of preservative is still necessary. A number of firms in Australia are now marketing butter that does not contain any preservative.

### QUESTIONS (2)—RAILWAYS.

#### *East-West Extension to Fremantle.*

Mr. NORTH asked the Premier: 1, Have any negotiations taken place recently between the State and Federal Governments for the extension of the East-West railway to Fremantle? 2, What are the prospects of the line being commenced before the State reaches its centenary?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (for the Premier) replied: 1, No. 2, This cannot be determined at present.

#### *Fruit for Refreshment Rooms.*

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is he aware that last season the Victorian Railway Department stored 6,000 cases of fruit for use in its refreshment rooms, and that in the present season it plans to store 18,000 cases? 2, In view of the splendid opportunity that the State railway refreshment rooms offer for the consumption of locally grown fruit, will he consider the introduction of a similar scheme?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, Yes. 2, Refreshment rooms are

leased in this State, and fruit is obtainable at all the principal rooms. There is no necessity to store fruit.

Mr. SAMPSON: Storage would encourage consumption.

### QUESTION—WATER SUPPLY, GUARANTEES.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Hon. J. Cunningham (Honorary Minister): In view of the undertaking that when income balanced expenditure guarantors of the Darlington and Glen Forrest water supply would be relieved of responsibility, will he advise—(a) The annual amount of guarantees; (b) Details of departmental costs and charges; (c) If receipts from charges, apart from payment of guarantees, do not already equal outgoings when is it anticipated the scheme will become self-supporting and the guarantors released?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM replied: (a) £136 10s. (b) Interest £810, sinking fund £263, total £1,073; maintenance £296, local management £45, sundry creditors £11, total £352; expenditure 1926-27, £1,425. (c) Revenue 1926-27, including guarantees, £1,214; loss for year 1926-27, £211; accumulated deficit to 30/6/27, £1,078; the department is not able to say when the scheme will become self-supporting.

### LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Panton, leave of absence for 14 days granted to Hon. A. McCallum (South Fremantle) on the ground of ill-health.

### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

#### *Sixth Day.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

MR. NORTH (Claremont) [4.41]: After having sat for three years in this House I feel better able to deal with questions that are likely to receive the attention of the Government than I was when I first entered the House. Therefore, I am afraid that the address I propose to deliver will be not only short but perhaps more prosaic and commonplace than were the remarks I made as a new member. After spending a few years in this Chamber we realise

that it is very hard to get anything done when it involves expenditure and especially if there is any opposition to the proposal. Consequently one must of necessity be thankful for small mercies, and if he can succeed in accomplishing so much as getting regulations slightly amended, it is something of an achievement for a member of the Opposition. We on this side of the House have no power to affect the progress of the State in any way whatsoever. I think a record was established at the recent elections by the fact that only three of the former members are missing. That is an extraordinary commentary upon the attitude of the people of this State. Personally, I read it to mean that they are satisfied with us and have returned us for our individual efforts rather than on the score of strong party feeling. I take it as an indication that we have been returned to speak and act for the districts we represent rather than as members of a strong party machine, whereas in the past party considerations have been strongly in evidence. Another reason may be that the people have more at heart the progress of the State than strong party measures. For that reason, perhaps, the life of our Parliaments is a little too short.

Mr. Marshall: There were two members whom the electors did not have an opportunity to return.

Mr. NORTH: In the first year Ministers are able to do little more than familiarise themselves with their duties; in the second year they begin to get their programme into full swing, and in the third year they have to make preparations for the ensuing election battle. It so happens this time that since they have been returned they will be able to do things which, from their own point of view, they have left undone during the past three years; in other words, they will get a six-years tenure of office. I am sorry for that, of course, from the Opposition policy point of view; but I consider that it is a great thing for the State, in one sense, to have a Ministry in the saddle long enough to really give effect to what it believes in, so that in the long run the people themselves will have a definite choice to make and there will be no question at the end of the six years as to whether or not there should be a change of Government. Coming now to a few parochial matters I said I wish to speak

about, the first one is an extremely humble little matter, yet one that is on everybody's lips—I heard the member for North Perth (Mr. MacCallum Smith) deal with it a little while ago by way of question. The subject is that of water supply, and on it I would like to let a resident of my district speak for himself. Perhaps it is well that occasionally we should break down the barrier and allow the people to speak for themselves in this Chamber. A few weeks ago I received a letter containing the following passages—

In common with two neighbours I had a meter installed by the Water Department during last year. Since then I have written to protest against the extraordinarily extravagant readings as set forth by the meter inspector. I find, too, that the neighbours mentioned above have protested in similar terms.

My correspondent points out that he has had \$5,000 gallons registered in a few weeks, and that he has no redress. He complained to the department, and the department's reply was, "If you pay 10s. 6d. we will test your meter." This has happened several times, and there is no redress.

Mr. Pantou: Your constituent has my sympathy.

Mr. NORTH: It is difficult for a member of Parliament to deal with all these matters, but I wrote to my correspondent and said that upon the meeting of Parliament I would bring the matter up for consideration. My suggestion in regard to water supply generally is that the meters are not worth the money they cost and are not checking the supply of water, but are inflicting undue hardship on those persons in whose premises they have been installed. The member for North Perth in his election advertisements stated that he was in favour of the abolition of meters. That strikes me as an excellent plan, because the meters now in use are not really sufficient to affect more than about a third of the consumers, and it is very hard on that one-third to be penalised. Further, it is hard upon the people to pay inspectors to go around inspecting meters and installing new ones when the instruments are known to be inefficient. In the long run do the meters control the use of water? Personally, I have seen more water wasted in the streets by burst mains than can possibly have been wasted by consumers. Again, I have had three meters installed on my premises in four years by the department. Those three meters have been put there because the meter

in use for the time being would not register enough, was not doing its job. Such things cost the people a great deal of money. I have never had a charge for excess water in all my years. My suggestion to the department is that the meters should be removed. Generally speaking, the meters are known to be an inaccurate source of registration.

Mr. Marshall: What would you suggest?

Mr. NORTH: To abolish the meters altogether, and to employ departmental officers who now go round fooling with meters to see that there is no waste. Where there is waste, the resident, whoever he is, should be fined.

Mr. Marshall: Would you favour a flat rate?

Mr. NORTH: Yes, based on the size of the block.

Mr. Marshall: That would come hard on the people with small dwellings.

Mr. NORTH: Those people to-day have no meters, and that is one cause of trouble. The capital cost of the meters, of course, is terrific. I made this same point last session in regard to electric meters. In the department to-day there are certain officers who have, I believe, put up the suggestion that meters should be abolished, as being a waste of money and not worth their salt, and also as not even restricting the waste of water.

The Minister for Mines: I would not like people to be left without meters in the hot weather. In that case, many people would never get any water at all.

Mr. NORTH: That is where the inspectors would come in. They could go round and check waste wherever it might occur. Now I come to the second subject I wish to speak about, and that is in connection with a little swamp of water we all see on the suburban line to Fremantle, called Butler's Swamp. The level of that swamp is rising. In Subiaco there is a similar sheet of water, but I understand the member for Subiaco (Mr. Richardson) has taken steps to deal with that through deep drainage. I am anxious to make use of the Subiaco drainage scheme for the little swamp in the Claremont area, Butler's Swamp. It could be done by installing a small pump which would raise the water a little and so cause it to run through the Subiaco drain into the sea. At the cost of a very few pounds, it is said, the lake could be emptied by a small pump. I shall bring the matter up again later. The residents are most anxious that the trouble should be dealt with. Water can be lifted

now at the cost of a penny per thousand gallons, and if the couple of million gallons in the lake were got rid of, the land could be made available for a small group settlement. Whereas the drainage of Herdsman's Lake cost £89,000, in this case the necessary expenditure has already been incurred in the form of the main drain running from Subiaco to the sea, and passing within a quarter of a mile of Butler's Swamp. Thus the district could be relieved cheaply. I may add that the matter concerns many residents with beautiful land, and I trust the department will give the question favourable consideration. Another matter I wish to refer to is that two or three years ago I diffidently suggested in this Chamber that the Health Department should notify the symptoms of certain diseases, so that the public in the early stages would know they had them. In this way many lives would be saved and the overcrowding of hospitals minimised. I am glad to observe that the department have posted notices in regard to the symptoms of cancer on railway stations and elsewhere, in fact all over the place. Medical practitioners know that both cancer and consumption can be cured in practically every case if only people will notify the symptoms in the early stages.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is the trouble, though.

Mr. NORTH: My point is that, generally speaking, people do not know what the early symptoms are. We are not all doctors or experts. As I mentioned a few years ago, a man walked into my office in Fremantle, and I noticed that his voice was hoarse and that he shuffled out with a little cough. In ten days that man was buried. He was found to have galloping consumption, and he had been walking around Fremantle with galloping consumption for about five months, no one any the wiser, not even himself. I therefore now ask the department to consider the advisableness of posting the early symptoms of tuberculosis in the same way as they have posted those of cancer. To me there seems to be a missing link between the expert knowledge of the specialist in regard to cancer and consumption on the one hand and the people on the other hand. Medical practitioners continually state that people suffering from these diseases can be cured if only they will seek medical advice in the early stages. We have the picture of hospitals overcrowded

with hundreds of cases of cancer and tuberculosis. The missing link I refer to could well be supplied by posting up information concerning the early symptoms of the disease, so that people may know where they are. Those who have made a study of the subject doubtless do know. Probably every member of this Chamber knows that loss of weight, sweating at night, and other things are the early symptoms of tuberculosis, and that these symptoms, if treated, can be removed. But the average man who has to earn his living does not know this. He knows what horse will win next Saturday.

The Minister for Mines: Not too many men know that.

Mr. NORTH: I do think it is time to try to improve our civilisation and the health of the people, and to achieve those other great ideals which are put forward from the platform at election time. The crux of the matter is that the hospitals should be emptied by reason of the people having more knowledge of the first symptoms of disease. Another matter is that people ought to have a real knowledge of what they should eat. I guarantee there is not any home in this State, or perhaps any adult person, with the knowledge of what should be eaten over, say, a week's period for the sake of health. All my life I have been trying to find out what is a perfect diet, and I cannot get the information. Mrs. Farrelly tells us we should eat brown bread. There is room for useful work by the Health Department, who have the necessary knowledge, but sit back on it, watching the struggling masses going to their daily toil and getting what they can for a shilling or two in the restaurants or taking home what they buy in the shops without knowing anything about what is good for them. The Health Department know, and I think it up to them to produce and publish a basic diet. We have a basic wage, which is talked about all over the country; but what do we do with that basic wage? Probably half of it is spent for foods which probably we do not need. Most likely people in general do not know which are the best foods for the body. The time, I think, has come when in the Arbitration Court and elsewhere, when in the homes of the people and in public places, information will be posted up by those who know—the Health Department—what really is a basic diet for the inhabitants of Western Australia. Then, in dealing with their weekly wage in their schedule of expenditure, they

may, if they want to, have that real surplus to which they are entitled over and above the cost of their food, clothing and amusements. At present the average home probably spends 15s. per week more than is necessary on food, through ignorance of the value of various foodstuffs and what they are for. I do not grudge the expenditure of that money. If the people want to have what are really luxury foods, let them buy them in preference to other luxuries; but the knowledge I have indicated has become essential, and the experts of the Health Department should promulgate it. People should be informed what is the basic diet for a white person living a normal life here. Very few people, I guarantee, possess that knowledge to-day. I merely put up the suggestion for the consideration of the Minister for Health.

Hon. G. Taylor: You are not looking too well yourself.

Mr. NORTH: Now I come to what is perhaps the most burning question in the district I represent—the taxi question. A motion has been tabled for the disallowance of certain regulations, but I may be in order in dealing with the matter briefly now. The object of the motion is not to injure the taxi services, but merely to voice a protest against the action of the Government in issuing, through the Routes Advisory Committee, instructions for the use by taxis of certain routes which are not now being used by them and which have never been used by them. The time has come for the House to consider the advisableness of continuing the appointment, through the Minister, of a Routes Committee having power to regulate routes without regard to the business value or paying capacity of the traffic. How could they say what was payable with merely a charabanc adviser on the Advisory Committee? Not one of them can be in a position to say what will be a paying route unless they have gone over the taxi route for some considerable time and collected the fares.

The Minister for Railways: They are concerned about the public safety.

Mr. NORTH: Exactly, and not about the convenience of the people. An interesting fact regarding the two routes, the one going from Perth to Cottesloe through certain local streets, and that from Perth to Fremantle, which is to start from Bazaar-terrace, right away from the existing ter-

minus, and conclude at Fremantle miles away from the present terminal point, is that the taxis have been allowed to run over the routes for many months without being interfered with. No accident has occurred along the routes. The local authorities have gone to considerable expense in improving the streets along which the taxis have travelled. The Claremont Council and the Cottesloe Council have spent thousands of pounds in tarring the surface of those roads. In Perth the taxis were given a stand by the City Council and they have been using that stand in St. George's-terrace all these months. The Mayor of Cottesloe and other prominent gentlemen have been working for months to get the existing route perfected. That route has given satisfaction to thousands of people, and the railways made a handsome profit of £30,000 during the last financial year. It seems curious that several months after the elections are over, the routes should be interfered with and the convenience of the public absolutely ignored. In place of the routes that the people have become accustomed to, new routes are specified that are not wanted and will be inconvenient. I am astounded that the Minister should allow the bus routes committee to function in that way. Their action means that people will not be able to patronise the taxis as conveniently as they have during the past months, nor are these new routes desired by them.

Hon. J. Cunningham: The committee is purely advisory, and the Minister has to deal with these matters.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Then we shall have to get rid of the Minister.

Mr. NORTH: When the Advisory Committee was formed, it was never expected that the Minister would be able to deal with all these matters, and naturally it was recognised that the matter would be largely in the hands of the Committee, but it was never anticipated that such things as have happened would be permitted. I would not blame the Minister for the position, but prefer to deal with the Committee. Who are those members? The Committee comprises representatives of the railways, the tramways, the charabancs, and the local authorities, and the police.

Hon. J. Cunningham: How can you improve upon that?

Mr. NORTH: The Committee has done what was anticipated. The Government officials predominate and naturally they lean

towards the railways. Through their representative, the charabancs have got their word in, with the result that the buses are still to be permitted to run to Fremantle from their stand in the Terrace, and the taxis have been pushed off and are to be compelled to start their trip to Fremantle from Bazaar Terrace, a stand that no one wants, and which will be convenient to no one. If anyone could show me seriously that we had a traffic problem in Perth, I would be prepared to listen to him. If anyone has visited the big cities of the world, or even Sydney, they must realise that we have no traffic problem here. We do not know what it means. To say that taxis are not to be allowed to start from the Terrace where they are conveniently situated for the purposes of people who live 20 or 30 minutes away from the railway line, and can enjoy a private ride home in a motor car for 1s., is most unfair. The Advisory Committee should not have that power.

The Minister for Railways: But there are about 600 routes.

Mr. NORTH: I am not objecting to all the other routes and all the other regulations. I am merely taking exception to the two routes I have referred to. On the Cottesloe route there are eight taxis running. Those vehicles give a quarter-hour service to upwards of a thousand persons who live 25 minutes or more or less away from the railway line. I cannot understand how the State can possibly benefit by scrapping those eight taxis or by forcing them off the route they have been accustomed to travel over. I cannot see any object whatever to be achieved. It seems most unfair and unreasonable. I have not heard a single word to justify the actions of the Advisory Committee. I hope the House will agree at a later stage to turn down these routes in favour of those the people desire. Certainly it cannot be said that any danger exists, because the taxis have run over the existing routes; that is proved by the fact that there have been no accidents. During the course of this dispute the two sections that have not been consulted are, on the one hand, the local authorities concerned—the Perth, Claremont, and Cottesloe Councils—and the general public on the other. In fact the general public have no say at all.

Hon. J. Cunningham: The general public are represented by the Police and by the Minister.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Then they are badly represented!

Mr. NORTH: It is unfair to expect the Minister to go into all the various routes in order to determine which will be a paying route, and so forth.

Hon. J. Cunningham: There are more than the taxis interested in the question. The State has an interest in it.

Mr. NORTH: The railways made a profit of £30,000 last year, and the department is doing good work. The trains are fully laden up to 9.30 a.m. and after 4.30 p.m. During those peak periods the railways do very well. It is ridiculous to say that the trains suffer because eight taxis ply during the slack part of the day to provide a quarter-hour service for a lot of people living away from the railway line. At the same time it is said that those people, curiously enough, are largely the supporters of the present Government. The time has come when public departments, like the Traffic Department, should not allow nine months to elapse before interfering with a route over which the local authorities have spent a considerable sum of money. No such department should be allowed to force the taxis on to other roads that are full of pot-holes and so on, making the traffic more difficult that ever. As to the railways themselves, the objection raised at the outset when the dispute commenced, was based on the fear that the railways would lose some of their profits. Just as that attitude was adopted at the outset, so it is to-day regarding the charabancs. The representative on the Advisory Committee, Mr. Irvine, has joined with the representative of the railways and adopted a similar attitude. There is a sort of unholy alliance between them. The taxis now find that they are up against vested interests, and so the work of the Advisory Committee is largely in the interests of the Minister for Railways and the vested interests represented by the motor buses.

The Minister for Railways: I have nothing to do with it.

Mr. NORTH: But the Minister has his representative on the Committee.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The hon. member was referring to the Commissioner of Railways.

Mr. NORTH: Seeing that the railways have made a profit of £30,000 during the year, it cannot be said that they are interfered with very much. We know that the railways are largely for the purpose of carrying wheat and superphosphate.

The Minister for Railways: If that were so the freight charges would have to be considerably increased.

Mr. NORTH: I would like to ask the Minister if he can tell us what the profits of the railways between Perth and Fremantle amount to. I am told that passenger traffic over the railways is never profitable unless the system is electrified. After all, it is the freight that makes the railways pay. We know that the permanent way from Midland Junction to Fremantle is really there to carry wheat and superphosphate. If the department is able to carry heavy passenger traffic during peak times, they should be satisfied to alter the system during the more slack periods. The authorities would be well advised to cut out some of the trains that are run after 9.30 a.m., and provide a quarter-hour service with single motor coaches. This would be sufficient to cope with the traffic during slack times. One coach could be run at a time, and that would prove adequate. I would like to know if it is not possible to separate our paying lines from our policy lines. At present the railways are run entirely in the interests of freight and we would like to know just where the loss is. The system, apparently, is that all policy lines have to be carried by those that show a profit. If we could separate the policy lines from those lines showing a little profit, then we would know where we stood. It would be possible for the Commissioner to spend money that would have the effect of improving our system. He would then show a profit of, say, £50,000 by means of putting the business on a sound basis, and could ask Parliament for a cheque for £30,000 or £40,000 to make good the losses on the policy lines.

The Minister for Railways: And ask the Treasurer to please increase taxation to get it. Where would you get the money?

Mr. NORTH: I do not pose as an expert but I have listened to what people have said. I have discussed it with railway men and have read articles on this topic. I believe that our policy lines are justified, but that our system should be brought up to date. I believe it would be far better if the department were to draw upon latter-day inventions and provide the metropolitan area with an improved service. That could be brought about in many ways. One is by the introduction of subways and better methods of ticket collection. Another way would be by the provision of modern petrol or Diesel

coaches for use during the slack period. If this and other things were done, the Commissioner could say, "If I can show a profit of £50,000 on my metropolitan lines, and a few other profits in other parts of the system by modernising the system, and if I shall not be checked by Parliament, I might just as well do so." To-day what he says to Parliament is, "We need to spend a few millions on this, that and the other"; and so Parliament says, "You will get practically nothing for the most part, and your demands will be ignored."

The Minister for Railways: That is not so.

Mr. NORTH: I do not say the present Government have not done a good deal; but as the result of running together lines that do not pay and lines that are profitable, there are repeated refusals by Parliament to the demands of the Commissioner. In consequence we are prevented from bringing our railways up to date. Particularly does this apply to the suburban lines.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You would have no Perth at all if you had not the back country.

Mr. NORTH: That is so. I fancy that in Victoria they keep the business lines and the policy lines separate.

The Minister for Railways: They get £100,000 per annum for those lines.

Mr. NORTH: It really seems that in the metropolitan service they are holding on to the existing plant and sitting back because they know that Parliament will not authorise the expenditure of a couple of hundred thousand pounds that might bring in £50,000 per annum. They know the proposition would be turned down.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No, it wouldn't.

The Minister for Railways: No, my word, it wouldn't. They had nearly half a million last year to spend on the system.

Mr. NORTH: What I am trying to show is that there is a tendency on the part of Parliament to keep down expenditure, because we look at the whole load, the seventy million load of taxation on our shoulders, the twenty millions on the railways and the tremendous load involved in carrying those non-paying lines. If the Commissioner could show that he required £50,000 per annum to maintain his policy lines, and could show a profit of say £100,000 on his profitable lines, it would be better if he were authorised to use his profits in improving the

system and come to Parliament for a grant for the policy lines.

The Minister for Railways: Where would Parliament get the money?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We are paying into the sinking fund.

Mr. NORTH: However, the subject is too great to go into fully just now. Later on I will get the facts together and put them up under a specific motion. I brought it forward to-day because of the difficulties of this taxi-charabanc business. It is very hard that the Government or the department should prevent private enterprise from assisting us when, apparently, we cannot find money to improve the railway services.

Hon. J. Cunningham: We are not doing that. We are merely prescribing routes.

Mr. NORTH: The prescribed routes have never been examined as to whether they will pay, whereas the existing routes are of very great convenience to the travelling public. It will be a sad day for the people when the Government drive a very useful service from the roads. I now come to the suburban side of this question. After all, apart from the State attitude in regard to the railways being depreciated through the use of the charabancs and taxis, we have another peculiar problem touched upon last night by the member for Swan (Mr. Sampson). I am referring to the manner in which the suburban roads are to be maintained in future. I have here a letter from one of the local authorities, of which there are five, in my electorate. This is from the secretary of the Claremont Road Board, and it reads as follows:—

Dear Sir, At the last meeting of this board I was instructed to ask if you could kindly call for a return to be presented showing traffic fees collected in the metropolitan area during the last three years, the cost of administration, and how the balance is allocated. The board considers this information should be supplied to local authorities, as they have no knowledge whatever of the method of distribution. During the financial year 1925-26 this board received over £1,000 from this account, but during last year, when the fees collected should have been considerably more, it received £200 less.

More roads are required, for we have more taxis, more charabancs, more cars, while the local authorities are receiving less and less money to spend upon the roads.

The Minister for Railways: All the money provided for the purpose goes into roads of some sort.



Mr. NORTH: I am only trying to raise the point that the local authorities are going to be throttled because no flexible financial position has been devised to cope with the increased expenditure upon roads. We have Federal roads and State roads. Millions of pounds are to be spent upon country roads. Side by side with that need we have the fact that the local authorities are groaning under the weight of the immensely increased burden of maintenance of taxi and charabanc roads. There are only two alternatives, both of them unpalatable. One is that when the promised municipal Bill comes forward it shall be made possible to increase rates. There should also be a similar provision in the Roads Act. Some of the boards to-day are rated to the very limit, and still cannot keep their roads going. The other alternative is to formulate a scheme under which the local authorities can amalgamate for the purchase of road-making plant. The cost of that plant is so great that it will be necessary for local authorities to amalgamate in its provision and share its use. That is another way of saying that they will have to increase local areas for administration for the purchase of plant. I have discussed this with various mayors and councillors in my district. They say there must be some money diverted from the petrol fund to the local authorities within the metropolitan area for the purpose of maintaining roads. We cannot compare the position here with that in the Old Country where, instead of the local authorities rating up to 3s. or 4s. in the pound, as is done here, they rate 10s., 12s. and even 15s. in the pound.

The Minister for Railways: And their motor license fees are double ours.

Mr. NORTH: That is so. Consequently their problem is relatively simple. Unless the Government are prepared to arrange some new amalgamation of areas—for instance, in my electorate there might be one common centre agreed upon. Of course I am speaking for the purposes of road-making plant only, not for general administration. God forbid that I should suggest any alteration of boundary; that is for the Minister. But we might possibly suggest a scheme of amalgamating three or four local authorities for the purpose of purchasing plant. They could then get a modern plant, such as we see used in the

city, which would do good work. Another expedient would be to try to divert some of the petrol money. That money is growing. We have just as much right to maintain the roads in the city and suburbs as any other roads. It is of no use saying we are going to get better service from cars by providing improved roads to Albany and other places, if those cars are going to be rattled to pieces on the suburban roads. Now that the elections are over and there is not much party excitement, it will be a great opportunity when the municipal Bill comes along to see if we cannot arrange some easy way for the local authorities to be given a fair chance to make roads, and not, as at present, continue to live in a nightmare of overdrafts and inefficient plants, bearing rumours of marvellous King's highways in the wilderness while in the metropolitan area there are not even the means to rate the people to get sufficient money to do necessary work. I think the problem could be solved. Motor sales are increasing tremendously and it should be simple, really, to devise some means of following that increased trade and from that try to find the necessary money for the local authorities. Thus the roads in the metropolitan area could be made as good as it is proposed the roads shall be between Perth and Albany within the next few years. In conclusion, I wish Parliament a successful run and hope we shall be able to do some useful work. The public have now sent us back with only three new members, which I think affords a good opportunity to do some good personal work for Western Australia and get rid of the party stuff that is dragged out of the box at election time.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS** (Hon. M. F. Troy—Mt. Magnet) [5.27]: I am sure I am stating what is generally believed by hon. members when I say the progress of the State is more directly affected by the activities of the department I have been called upon to administer than by those of any other department of the Public Service. I am glad to say the record of the Lands Department is one of progress. This year, with the areas under crop, great results are expected. Up to date the season has been almost ideal. I doubt whether for many years past the State has been so blessed with a season as with the season we are now experiencing. From north to south of the State, and from the

Indian Ocean to the South Australian border, with the exception of one or two localities, the season promises better than any of its predecessors. That is a very fine thing for Western Australia. May it long continue. Last year the season was a very good one, except in one or two localities where the production of wheat was not as great as had been expected. At the same time it was a remarkably good season. The season produced 30,041,783 bushels of wheat, which was a record for the State, being 9,570,606 bushels more than the yield of the previous year, and 6,154,386 bushels better than the record established in 1924-25. This year we have an additional 400,000 acres under wheat. I confidently believe that we shall produce this year at least 35,000,000 bushels of wheat. That will be another fine record, and will scarcely be the last record we shall make, because I anticipate that in the years to come the State will be producing between 50,000,000 and 60,000,000 bushels.

Hon. G. Taylor: There is nothing to stop it.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS:** These are the great expectations we have. I am privileged to be associated for some time with the department whose activities mean so much for the future prosperity of Western Australia. The average wheat yield for the State was high last year, when compared with the past averages of the State, namely, 11.68 bushels per acre. It has been exceeded only once since 1920, namely, in 1925 when it was 12.79 bushels. We have much to do in order to raise that State-wide average to something approaching the average production of the greatest wheat producing States in Australia, namely, Victoria, New South Wales, and South Australia. Compared with those States our average is not very high, and it remains for the Department of Agriculture and the Parliament of Western Australia to preach unceasingly to the people that the important thing is not so much acreage as production. The whole attention of our producers should be directed to making this country yield as much as it can under the best conditions. If we aim at this I feel sure that our State-wide average can be increased within the next year or two. I am satisfied also that even the Department of Agriculture can pay more attention to this aspect of production. Its officers who are occupied with duties

that are not essential to a proper service to the State might devote more time to traversing the country and preaching increased production and so bring about a greater State-wide average yield. To indicate how far we are behind the Eastern States, may I say that in Victoria, according to the figures for 1924-25, the average production of wheat was 17 bushels; in New South Wales it was 16 bushels, and in South Australia 12 bushels; and in Western Australia our highest average was 12 bushels. There is no reason why we should not reach the standard obtained in Victoria. Last year the acreage planted for wheat in Western Australia was 2,574,000 acres. If we increase the average yield by only 1 bushel per acre, at a value of 5s. 8d. per bushel this would mean additional wealth to the value of £729,000. But we can do much more than that. I feel sure that within the next 10 years our average will have been raised to 15 bushels, and that will mean millions of additional wealth coming to Western Australia. Our wheat producers have also had an excellent time during the last 13 years, not so much in respect of the prices they have received, as in respect of the seasons they have experienced. Since the drought broke in 1915 there has not been a bad season in the wheat belt. It is truly remarkable that in other countries where wheat growing is extensively engaged in, the experience is five good seasons in succession, with an occasional break by way of drought, or some other condition detrimental to wheat growing. Since 1920 farmers have received a reasonably good price for their wheat. That is what has made the wheat belt. When I hear people asking what has made the wheat belt, I say that if it had not experienced these good seasons, and wheat had not reached the good prices paid for it during the last seven years, there would have been a different tale to tell in the matter of production and the prosperity of our farmers. We have had excellent seasons and good prices. Before the war wheat was selling at from 3s. 2d. to 3s. 6d. per bushel, but in 1920 the price received by the farmers, after all deductions had been made, was 8s. 10½d. per bushel. In 1920-21 the price was 8s. 4½d., and since then the prices have ranged from 4s. 1½d. to 5s. 8d. That is an experience that has never before occurred in this or any other State except during a

most exceptional season, and then only for a short time. These are the factors responsible for the building up of the wheat belt.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: There are disadvantages too. You could not compare present-day prices with those received in 1913, and present conditions with the conditions of those days.

Mr. Davy: And you could not compare present prices with those received 100 years ago.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am not attempting to do so. There are disadvantages, but the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Not far.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is no use saying that, because I know to the contrary.

Hon. G. Taylor: So do other people.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I sometimes hear people talking about hard times on the wheat belt, the price of commodities, and the worries of the farmers. Any man who has farmed his property properly, and has reasonably decent land, must have made money in Western Australia during the past eight years.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Undoubtedly.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Good seasons, good prices, good land, and good settlers have made the wheat belt.

Mr. Davy: No one more deserves the profits than the farmers.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I will not acknowledge that. I do not say that any man who goes on the land and takes all the risks of the business, particularly those who went through without knowing the possibilities of the land, and who were ignorant as to the rainfall, and took the thing on as a gamble, deserve all they get in the way of profit. Wheat farming was a gamble. No one knew how it would turn out. I do not care how wise people pretend to be now, in the old days people did not know whether the far-eastern wheat belt had a rainfall sufficient to enable wheat-growing to be carried on. In the early stages these areas were affected by drought. Many of the settlers walked off their holdings, and many others would have walked off had it not been for the assistance rendered to them by the Government. The whole thing was a gamble. Those who remained on the land and persevered deserve all they got in the way of prosperity. The same thing occurs in every

other walk of life. There must be a time when success follows in the train of every industry. If a man perseveres and sticks to his task, and ultimately attains success, we all say he is entitled to the good things that come to him. There has been considerable activity with respect to the areas alienated and which have from year to year been brought under production. In 1920 the area alienated under C.P. and H.F. conditions was 1,468,000 acres, in 1921 it was 1,726,000 acres, in 1922 it was 1,922,000 acres, in 1923 it was 1,826,000 acres, in 1925-26 it was 2,022,000 acres, and in 1926-27 it was 2,177,000 acres. There has been an almost continuous increase in the matter of applications for land, and in the amount of land allocated to settlers in this State since 1920. That is substantial evidence that the country is being developed. The land laws demand that it shall be developed. It is a good augury that our production will rapidly increase, as it is increasing, and, as all the available land in Western Australia is brought under settlement and production, I can see very prosperous times ahead of the State, provided it is handled well, as it is being done by the present Government.

Mr. J. H. Smith: That is a question.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No State in Australia, and probably no country in the world, assists its settlers as is the case in Western Australia. In every way assistance is being given to them. The progress made in the wheat industry could not have been brought about except for State assistance. The only place where assistance has not been given is in the areas represented by the members for Moore and Irwin. These areas, unfortunately, did not receive the stimulus given to other areas. Had it been possible to give those areas the same Government assistance that was given to others, they would have been, as they are destined to be, the foremost mixed farming districts of Western Australia. I do not wish to make invidious distinctions, or to draw upon myself the wrath of the members representing localities like Bruce Rock and Wyaleatchem.

Mr. Latham: I have been waiting for that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There is no doubt that the Midland areas, generally speaking, have given the highest yields in the State, and in my opinion are destined to

be the most productive mixed farming areas in the State. That will be evidenced more and more as the years go on.

Mr. Mann: They are the most susceptible to rust.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Many settlers are demanding a lot of assistance for the development of their areas, and the State has given it to the utmost of its capacity. Members will know that in order to assist settlers to carry stock in the wheat belt, which they were unable to do owing to the depredations of dingoes, a considerable amount of wire netting was advanced to settlers on easy terms. Under the Commonwealth wire netting advances scheme, money was made available without payment of interest for a number of years. The first advance represented 1,899 miles of wire netting, costing £87,000. The State under the 1926 Act has advanced to 415 applicants 1,813 miles of wire netting at a cost of £82,000.

Hon. G. Taylor: In which year was that?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It was advanced under the Wire Netting Act, 1926. That is evidence that settlers are availing themselves of the advantages of the Act, and there should be a great number of settlers in the wheat belt in the position, very soon, to carry large numbers of sheep. That will still further enhance the value of their asset, and it will also be an advantage to Western Australia by reason of the increased sheep and wool production. The assistance given by the Agricultural Bank last year for improvements, stock, machinery, etc., amounted to £383,251. That amount is £229,710 in excess of the total advance in 1921. I am not making this comparison for the purpose of making it appear that not sufficient was advanced in 1921; I am merely quoting the figures to show the progress that is being made. The greater the amount of settlement, the greater will be the production and the greater need will there be for the bank to make advances. In connection with clearing, cultivation, ringbarking, fencing, draining, the sinking of wells and reservoirs, etc., the advances made by the bank in 1921 totalled £30,604, whilst last year the amount was £16,000. In each successive year there has been increased expenditure.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What about the year 1923?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In that year the amount advanced was £282,504. In

1924 it was £307,362, in 1925 £291,039 and last year, as I have stated, the figure was over £316,000. I have here the figures of the loans repaid, but I have not the details. In 1920-21 the amount was £168,574, in 1921-22 £172,397, in 1922-23 £145,973, in 1923-24 £192,163, in 1924-25 £178,575, in 1925-26 £265,157, and in 1926-27 £339,142. That gives us a total of £1,461,980. It is a happy thing that settlers are making these payments, because it is evidence that they are carrying on a prosperous industry. The amounts advanced by the Industries Assistance Board show a decrease, and that too, is a happy state of affairs, and proves that the formerly assisted settlers are getting on their feet, and are able to leave the board. It is interesting to know that the Industries Assistance Board has advanced the settlers £11,373,406.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: And how much of that has been paid back?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No less a sum than £9,682,389. There is still outstanding a total of £2,455,170 after charging up interest and writing off bad debts. Against this figure the proceeds collected to date from last season's crop are held in trust pending distribution, and these amount to £574,205.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Of course the farmers have a lot of assets.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The figures speak for themselves; they are an indication of the progress that is being made, and also that the position of those people who were assisted by the Industries Assistance Board is financially sound and that they have been able to repay the Government a considerable portion of the advance made.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is the truest form of co-operation.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: And a most successful form, too. There has been advanced to soldier settlers apart from the advances I have mentioned, a considerable sum of money, and I am glad to say that soldier settlers in many districts are so well established that they have been able to repay their advances to the Treasury. Last year the payments made amounted to £230,988. The total repayments made by soldier settlers amount to £1,000,000. In the wheat areas particularly—I regret that I cannot speak so well about soldier settlement in other parts of the State—in the majority of instances the soldiers have been very successful.

Mr. Latham: There have been very few failures.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Western Australia's losses in respect of soldier settlement have been considerably less than those in any other State of the Commonwealth. The explanation is simple. In this country there was an abundance of land available for settlement, and that land was secured at a reasonable price. In the Eastern States the demand that existed for land created a fictitious value, and the purchase price was far beyond the capacity of the man on the land to meet. Consequently there has been great trouble in the Eastern States; there always will be trouble where land values are greater than the producing value. Hon. members frequently talk about enhancing land values and deplore the fact that the value of land in this State is so low. I hope land values will never become too high in Western Australia. Immediately they become high, it will be a bad lookout for the person who goes on the land. There will always be a prosperous, contented, and progressive people when the margin between the cost of production and the value of the products is big enough to enable the producers to carry on successfully. It will be a bad thing for Western Australia if our land values become so high that the man who secures an area is not able to make the successful living that he anticipates. The creation of high land values in the Eastern States is largely responsible for what is known as the Paterson butter scheme. It is claimed that that scheme has conferred a wonderful advantage on Australia. It is a levy on the people, a tax on the consumers, just as if the Government had imposed on them a form of taxation. It takes two millions out of the pockets of the people of Australia, and that money is handed over to a body of producers. That imposition is due to land values in the Eastern States being too high. When the war was over the price of butter was 2s. 6d. per lb. Land was purchased for soldier settlements at a high value whereas it was not of that value. Now the butter producers, by reason of the scheme, are able to carry on and meet their liabilities. They had reached that stage when they had to cast about for means by which the position in which they found themselves might be relieved. The means were found, and now the consumer is paying. A pool was created and the price at which butter was to be sold

was fixed. It is 3d. a lb. dearer than it ought to be, and that 3d. a lb., as I have already said, takes out of the pockets of the people of Australia over two millions sterling. That kind of thing will be continued wherever land values are excessive.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is due to the tariff.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I can see in future, if the consumer does not wake up, he is not going to have too happy a time. I admit that the same principle applies to the dried fruits industry. Legislation had been passed in South Australia and Victoria, creating a pool. Our dried fruit products were exported to the Eastern States and were commandeered by the Dried Fruits Board. This board took our fruits as their products and disposed of them as they thought fit. Then they threatened us that if we did not pass the legislation desired by them, they would swamp our markets. We were thus compelled to do so. I appealed to the Federal Government and pointed out that what was being done was against the letter of the Constitution. The Federal Government, however, did not reply to my communications. The Federal Government, of course, were behind the boards in the Eastern States and were not anxious to express an opinion. Now action is being taken to contest the legislation passed by the State Governments in the other States and an appeal is being made to the Privy Council. I never approved of the dried fruits legislation of the other States.

Mr. Davy: You rightly apologised when you introduced the Bill last session.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, and the hon. member pointed out the defects in it. In that legislation I provided that if the people of this State were unduly exploited I could wipe out the Dried Fruits Board with a stroke of the pen. If it is desired to have legislation to create food monopolies then it is reasonable that a case should be stated first and the need for legislation proved. The reason for the Paterson butter scheme was that the dairy farmers in the Eastern States could not make a living, and at bedrock he cannot make a living because his land costs £60, £70 or £80 an acre, and is not worth it.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Because of the tariff.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No. The other night the Leader of the Opposition

spoke of Lismore, New South Wales. I lived there prior to coming to Western Australia and my people are still there engaged in the sugar and butter industries. I can speak with first-hand knowledge of Lismore. In that magnificent tract of country, carrying probably the biggest rural population of any similar area in Australia, pioneered and settled over 80 years ago, where Nature is most abundant, where the soil is very fertile with a rainfall of 80 or 90 inches distributed over the summer and winter months and enjoying a tropical heat something like that of Carnarvon, I was surprised to find that all the new settlers were having a bad time. The new settlers could not pay their debts, but the old settlers were on velvet. What was the reason? The old settlers were not penalised by high land values. Those in trouble were people who had bought in at high prices, and they will continue to be in trouble because, no matter how good the land is, they cannot produce beyond its capacity.

Mr. Davy: Do you suggest there should be a commission to fix the price of land?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If it is reasonable that the worker should go to the Arbitration Court and have his wages fixed on what it costs him to live, it is not right that other sections of the community should be able to create a monopoly and fix prices without going before some tribunal, stating their case, and proving it. I made very close inquiries at Lismore because the Paterson scheme was discussed at the Brisbane conference. I found that the settlers in the Eastern States are still further penalised by the high land values, because the local taxation is based on the alleged land values. The land tax is assessed on the selling value and not the producing value of the land. In my opinion, it is a bad thing for a country when the land values become too high, because the people are then subjected to unfair conditions and all sorts of attempts are made by Parliaments and parties to find a remedy without getting down to the basic evil. The whole trouble with the butter producer in the Eastern States is that land was purchased for repatriation purposes at too high a valuation.

Mr. Davy: You cannot remedy that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Probably for a few years the price of land will continue to increase. The butter producer at present is doing very well with the loading of 3d. per lb. and, as a result of that, his

land values will mount still higher. When another man seeks to purchase, up will go the price again. I often wonder where this is going to end. I am glad that land values in Western Australia are low. The fact that they are low and that our land is productive is the reason why we are receiving so many inquiries from the Eastern States for land. Never a day passes without my receiving an inquiry from the Eastern States, inquiry from men with capital of £3,000, £4,000, £5,000, desirous of settling their sons on the land here. They can get land in the Eastern States, but not at a price that will permit of the purchasers making a profit and living under conditions which a man should enjoy in this or any other country. I suppose it seems peculiar to some members that I should be deprecating an increase in land values, but I have seen the man who has to struggle in order to pay the high land values, and I know what the struggle means. It reacts on his development and character, and the results are bad for the individual and the State. I want to see our producers bigger men than are those in the Eastern States and enjoying finer opportunities, because that makes for happiness and contentment. It is a matter for congratulation that the flocks depastured in the State are increasing. Last year the number of sheep totalled 7,436,312, and this year and next year I expect a very substantial increase as a result of the magnificent season extending north and south over 1,000 miles of territory. I look forward to a substantial increase not only of flocks, but of wool production. In 1920 the value of our wool was £2,186,547; in 1923 it was £4,134,645, and in 1926 it was £3,124,597. In 1923 the figures reached high-water mark, but that was due to the exceptional prices obtained for wool.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The decline in 1926 was partly due to a bad season in portions of the North.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. This year I think we shall have a much bigger clip, and will rapidly make good that loss.

Hon. G. Taylor: There has been a great improvement in the quality of the wool.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The number of cattle has decreased, due to the bad times experienced in the North, because the cattle business is not profitable. There has also been a decrease in the number of

horses. I regret this, because I do not think we have yet reached the stage when we can do without horses on the farm. Many farmers are purchasing tractors, but I think horses will always be required on the farm. In years to come manufacturers may produce a tractor that will be fool-proof, if I may so describe it, but for all that I think the most economical farm work is that done by the horse teams. For this reason I should like to see more horses, particularly draught horses, bred in the State. There is a very good market for them at present. I intend to ask the Treasurer to provide a sum of money this year for the importation of Clydesdales for the State farms. It is important that this industry should not be neglected.

Hon. G. Taylor: Do you intend to import brood mares?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, stallions.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The only decent horse I saw at the country shows I attended was the State-owned horse.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: On the stations in the North and North-West a fine class of horse used to be bred, but most of those stations are now carrying sheep. There is a demand in the market for horses which at present are bringing very high prices, and I hope that the breeding of horses will be carried on again on a large scale.

Mr. Ferguson: The best of them are purchased and sent to the Eastern States.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We buy large numbers of horses from the Eastern States. I should like to know what it has cost this State for Eastern States horses in recent years.

Mr. Latham: A tremendous amount.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We have to pay a high price for them, a price in excess of their value, but we must pay it because we must have the horses. Regarding fruit, last year we obtained a record crop of between 700,000 and 800,000 cases of apples. The fruit was of excellent quality and sold at remunerative prices. The quantity exported was a record, totaling as it did 600,000 cases. Fifty thousand cases were sent to the other States of the Commonwealth. The value of fruit production, chiefly apples, in 1920 was £705,658; in 1923 it was £564,615, and in 1926 it was £728,565. There has been a great demand

for our fruit in the Eastern States this year.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It has brought over £1 a case.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In addition to realising a good price there, Western Australian apples still bring the highest prices on the overseas markets. If the producers of fruit continue to receive those high prices, the industry should be considerably enlarged. A little while ago I was speaking of the butter industry, and criticising the Paterson scheme. The member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson) said the disadvantages of production were much greater now than they were prior to the war. I admit that to some extent they are.

Mr. Lindsay: The index figure shows they are.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I think we all admit that, but still our product is now of much higher value. Members will probably be surprised to learn that the average price of butter fat prior to the war was 11d. per lb. In 1919, when the States were engaged in repatriating the soldiers, the price was 2s. 6d. per lb. On that market price land was repurchased in the Eastern States for the settlement of men in the dairying industry. The average price of butter fat during the last five years has been 1s. 6½d. per lb., while the present price is 1s. 7d. That is nearly 100 per cent. in advance of the pre-war price. The outlay on a dairy farm cannot be compared with that on a wheat farm, and provided the land is reasonably productive, I think dairy farmers ought to be able to make a reasonable profit when they receive nearly 100 per cent. more for their butter fat than they did prior to the war.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The industry is worth two millions more to Victoria than is wheat.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Of course; there are more people engaged in it. For my part I would rather grow wheat. There has been an increase also in our butter production. In 1925-26 we produced 3,201,727 lbs. and in 1926-27 we produced 3,750,000 lbs., or 500,000 lbs. more than in the previous year. The production of cheese has increased from 3,818 lbs. in 1925-26 to 23,500 lbs. last year. It is encouraging to know that every industry shows an increase, and I expect

is a result of the work in the South-West that a much greater increase will be recorded in the next few years. The time should be at hand when the increased production of butter fat will enable us to overtake the importations from the Eastern States. Another index to the progress of the State is found in the production of potatoes. In 1923 the value of the potatoes produced was £149,510, while last year it was £245,679, a remarkable increase.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We are now exporting some potatoes to the Eastern States and obtaining a good price for them.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is so.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I should like to say a few words concerning experimental farms generally and the Muresk College before I complete my remarks on the progress of land settlement and agriculture in this State. As members know, the Government during the last Parliament established a number of experimental farms; one at Salmon Gums in the Esperance area, one at Ghooli, east of Southern Cross, and another at Bampawah, east of Perenjori. These farms are now in process of development. At Salmon Gums 200 acres are already under crop. I have not been able to visit that farm, but I conclude that it ought to be within a fairly safe zone for production. It should be an important wheat-producing centre. The object of establishing an experimental farm there is to prove to the settlers how land should be cultivated, and to provide seed wheat for the local settlers. A manager was appointed last year, and the farm is being properly equipped. At the farm east of Southern Cross a similar area of country has been cleared, and 150 acres are under fallow. We did not attempt to put in a crop in the first year. Our object is not to farm on methods that might be suitable in other parts but would not be suitable in the drier areas. We hope to show farmers how the land should be cultivated under those particular conditions. Rather than put a crop in during the first year we fallowed the land, and the farm will be conducted entirely under fallow conditions. We wish to set an example to people in the district, and do not wish it to be said that the department took risks

when putting our crop in. All the country in the Southern Cross and Bullfinch areas will have to be carefully farmed under fallow conditions. I hope that agriculture there will prove a success, for that is where the future extension of land settlement must take place. If we set the example there and farm under the best conditions applicable to such districts, and follow the best practices adopted with so much success in the drier areas of the Eastern States, we ought to get good results. With the example that we set and the opportunities given to settlers of seeing the demonstrations made on the farm, we ought to be able to establish the Southern Cross area, and all that country towards Ravensthorpe, as successfully as the rest of the wheat belt has been established. At the third farm to which I referred we have let a contract for the clearing of 250 acres. I think the rainfall on the outer edge of that locality is better than it is at Southern Cross. The records taken at the Warriedar State battery for 10 years are very satisfactory. As one travels east towards the Murchison one reaches shallower country, where the settler will not be able to conserve moisture. In districts where the land is patchy, where there are a few hundred acres of heavy land and a few thousand acres of other types of land, we shall have to make the areas bigger. In most parts of this country water can be obtained in great quantities at shallow depths. The basis of operations will be to start off with, say, a few hundred sheep and gradually bring the best parts of the land under cultivation. With fodder crops it would soon be possible to increase the flock to respectable dimensions. Wheat growing could come later, and so ultimately the area would be successfully developed. It may be necessary to establish two more experimental farms, especially if we wish to extend our agricultural development into the still drier areas. I am not in accord with those people who say that rainfall follows population. That is a ridiculous dictum. As population expands more people will settle on the country where, from experience, they will know how best to make use of the rainfall they get. By conserving the rainfall in the dry areas as the settlers in Victoria and South Australia do in their dry areas, we shall bring these districts into productivity, but we must find out what the best methods are to adopt. I do not say there are not advantages



peculiar to some climates and soils. In the areas with a lower rainfall these factors are not important when it comes to the question of wheat growing. It is possible to produce a crop of wheat on a rainfall of six inches or less, provided the rainfall is spread over the growing period, and the wheat is sown on fallowed land. If the same rainfall were obtained in the Avon Valley area, I doubt whether the farmers would get more than sheep feed from their crops. I was very interested in the experiments that are being conducted at Kalgoorlie by the Department of Agriculture. With a rainfall of three inches spread over the growing period, as much as five bushels to the acre was produced there. I was surprised to find that this was f.a.q. wheat. It was as perfect in the grain as any produced in the Kellerberrin or eastern wheat belts. There may be something in soil and climatic conditions that assists in the growing of such wheat. He would be a courageous man who would define the limits of our wheat areas. A great deal of experimental work yet remains to be done by the Government to determine how far the wheat areas can be extended. There is no doubt that expansion must take place east of the Wongan Hills railway and extending north towards the Murchison railway, as well as on that belt of country south from Southern Cross towards Ravens-thorpe and then across to Salmon Gums. There is a fairly extensive area of country there suitable, I think, for wheat growing. My hope is to have that area surveyed and brought under settlement as soon as possible. We ought to push our experimental farms out towards and beyond the Esperance Northwards railway. I have discussed with some members of the Migration Committee on their visit to this State the advisability of assisting us with finance in order to conduct experiments in those districts, preparatory to developing them. I believe, if the Commonwealth would help us to establish experimental farms there, very much good could be achieved. We could employ migrants there, those who were fitted to be so employed, and after five or six months' training they would be in a far better position to take up land for themselves than would otherwise be the case.

Mr. Thomson: That is a good idea.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The matter has been viewed in a favourable light, and it is yet possible that we may be able to establish experimental farms in areas that

are now far removed from settlement, and in a much shorter time prove their value from the point of view of production. I frequently see statements in the Press to the effect that people in the Eastern States are looking to the West for land. I am inundated with demands for land. I receive letters from people in the Eastern States with capital who want to come here. If a thousand blocks of land were thrown open for selection to-morrow, and a month's notice were given, I believe there would be 5,000 applications for them.

Mr. Lindsay: For wheat land?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have asked the Surveyor General to make every effort to find land for settlers. We have discussed the localities where such land might be forthcoming, and the Surveyor General has received instructions from me not to lose no time in classifying the land and making it available. We can make use of money that comes to us under the migration agreement, provided the money is utilised to the best advantage, and we can obtain suitable land for settlement. If we can do this, I have no doubt we shall be able to settle many people within the next few years. I am depending upon the Surveyor General to find the land. When he does so I shall soon create the organisation to deal with it. I hope to have plenty of land available for people from the Eastern States who have capital of their own. We shall not, of course, give them preference, but I would welcome people from the other States with capital, particularly the young men who have just come out of the agricultural colleges and have had experience of dry farming conditions along the Murray River and in South Australia. With the knowledge that these young men possess they would afford a splendid example to the local farmers who are settled around them.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Our young men should have first claim upon any land that is available.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: And they are going to get it. If we can get the land there will be room not only for our own young men but for those I have referred to from the Eastern States, whose knowledge and experience would be of such great value to other young men settling around them. Muresk College was opened last year by the Premier. There are now 45 students in attendance.

The requests for enrolment far exceed the available accommodation, and the Government are making provision for the erection of additional space. Members know all about the college so I will make no further reference to it.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is a well managed institution.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. I have had a talk with some of the students, who tell me they like Mr. Hughes because he is so strict. That is a very fine thing to be said of him. A man in his position requires to be strict. I believe Mr. Hughes will render valuable service to the country. He is a man with strong personality and irreproachable character, and has a wonderful influence over the young men under his control. I now wish to refer to the Vermin Act. Many complaints were made during the last election concerning its operations. I might have left my colleague to deal with the matter, but for the fact that the Act was passed while I was Minister in charge. Members during the election made much ado about the incidence of the vermin rate. They talked about it as a great hardship, as one of the most distressing impositions that the Government could have brought about.

Mr. Latham: There are two vermin rates in existence.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am not going to be led off the track. Members were in the House when this legislation was enacted. It could not have been passed without the consent of both Houses of Parliament. It was asked for by the Pastoralists' Association and the Primary Producers' Association.

Mr. Thomson: Not on the lines on which it was passed.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In April, 1923, at the request of the Pastoralists' Association the Minister for Agriculture arranged that the Director of Agriculture and the Chief Inspector of Rabbits should meet the association and discuss the proposed Bill to amend the Vermin Act. It was ascertained that the pastoralists desired (1) a uniform bonus on dingoes, (2) a uniform rate to be charged on all pastoral holdings, (3) a maximum rate to be fixed, (4) no portion of rate to be devoted to the destruction of rabbits. On the 27th September, 1923, a letter was received from the Pastoralists' Association requesting—

(1) That a uniform rate be struck throughout the pastoral and agricultural areas on unimproved land values for the destruction of all vermin; (2) a central board to be formed; (3) the rate to be determined by the central board subject to the approval of the Minister; (4) the central board, if funds were required, and with the approval of the Minister to have power to levy a uniform rate on all lands not exceeding a penny in the pound on the unimproved value; (5) the Government to contribute pound for pound.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: From whom is that letter?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: From the Pastoralists' Association, who I may say have never taken exception to this legislation. A letter dated the 15th October, 1923, was received from the Primary Producers' Association.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: That was all blown out last year.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But the hon. members concerned so often changed their minds that what they really want is not known to the Government. On the 15th October, 1923, a letter was received from the secretary of the Primary Producers' Association in which he stated that the amendment to the Vermin Bill had received consideration by his executive who recommended—(1) A uniform rate to be struck through the pastoral and agricultural areas on the unimproved value to provide for bonuses for the destruction of wild dogs, foxes and eagles, (2) a central board to be formed; (3) the rate to be determined by the central board subject to the approval of the Minister, the money not to be used for the destruction of rabbits, or for the upkeep of fences, or the erection of fences; (4) the central board to have power to levy a uniform rate not exceeding a penny in the pound on the unimproved value and the Government to contribute pound for pound.

Mr. Thomson: That was three years before you introduced the Bill, though.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That was the only request received from the Primary Producers' Association.

Mr. Thomson: We opposed that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Of course, because the hon. member opposes everything in the nature of taxation. The association asked for a rate of one penny

in the pound to be levied on the unimproved value. I had deputations from the association and others asking for this legislation, and I said to them, "It is no use levying a small rate, because it will be ineffective," and the deputation agreed with me. So the legislation was passed by this House with several amendments. To my great surprise, during the election I found the people who had asked me for this legislation condemning the Government for having proposed it at their request.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: We contended that the rate should be fixed.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We fixed the rate at the request of the Pastoralists' Association—a halfpenny on the agriculturist and a penny on the pastoralist.

Mr. Latham: And you got £34,000 whereas you had only spent £3,000 previously.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If anybody badly needs that expenditure, it is the persons represented by hon. members opposite.

Mr. Lindsay: But they are paying the money.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The constituents of those hon. members were constantly complaining of the depredations of dingoes, which prevented them from carrying sheep. All the producers in the wheat belt must carry sheep, not only to increase their wealth production but to keep their fields clean. No farmer can farm properly under fallowing conditions unless he has sheep to eat down the growth on the fallow; and these men could not carry sheep because of the dingoes.

Mr. Latham: But they are doing it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Government imposed a tax, and now there is a fund. I am defending the action of the Government because it was taken at my suggestion.

Mr. Thomson: What we object to is the incidence of the tax.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have heard members ask, "Why do not those who want dingo destruction pay for it?" If there is one man in this country who has fought the dingo pest for himself, it is the pastoralist. "Through the Murchison, the Gascoyne and the Ashburton, and right up North, the pastoralist has fought the dingo single-handed, asking for no assistance. I

know a station on the Murchison where 200 dingoes were destroyed every year, where no lambs had been produced for five years. The returned soldier settlers in those areas went out and destroyed the dogs; and they are paying into this fund now, not for their own protection but to help the constituents of hon. members opposite out of their difficulties. Throughout the great pastoral areas of Western Australia the pastoralist are paying for the protection of the constituents of hon. members opposite.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: But they are not paying a double tax.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They are paying every tax that the Legislature provides they must pay.

Mr. Griffiths: The agriculturists pay four times the amount.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: What is all this trouble about? Let us see what the agriculturists actually pay. Hon. members opposite will be surprised when they hear it, and the farmers, too, will be staggered to learn of the frightful impost. I have here figures supplied by the Taxation Commissioner as to this stupendous impost. At Walgoolin the average value of the land is 10s. per acre, the total unimproved value is £500 per 1,000 acres; and the vermin rate is represented by the magnificent sum of £1 0s. 10d. annually.

Mr. Latham: But they are paying another vermin rate to the local vermin board.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: One wretched sheep will pay that rate yearly. Yet this was the war cry of the election, the vermin tax! At Kondinin the average value of the land is 15s. per acre, and the unimproved value of 1,000 acres is £750. At Kondinin, where the farmers cannot carry sheep because of the dingo pest, where they asked for protection, they pay the magnificent sum of £1 11s. 3d. per thousand acres annually. Yet this vermin tax figures in ten motions on the agenda paper of the Primary Producers' Association; its abolition is demanded by ten different branches. Take Trayning and Kununoppin, where the average value per acre is 12s. and the unimproved value of 1,000 acres is £600. At Trayning and Kununoppin the vermin rate for destruction of dingoes is £1 5s. per annum on 1,000 acres. Now take Bruce Rock, which has a little more cause for complaint, but certainly not much. At Bruce Rock the unimproved value of 1,000 acres is £1,050 and the impost is £2 3s. 9d. on 1,000 acres.

At Kellerberrin the levy is on an unimproved value of £1,500 for 1,000 acres, and it amounts to £3 2s. 6d. The Murchison pastoralists, who fought the dogs years ago, pay their vermin rate without squealing about it. When I went up for election the pastoralists did not oppose me because of the rate. They are paying it just as I am paying it.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: Half the land you quote has no value at all.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member does not know what I am quoting. Just imagine the stupidity of a man without knowledge telling me that the values I am quoting are wrong! The hon. member is convicted of sheer ignorance. He does not know.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But 1,000 acres of pastoral land rented at 10s. pays only 10d.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: A thousand acres on the Murchison will carry 50 sheep.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: A thousand acres of unimproved land at Bruce Rock will not carry two sheep.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Personally I pay this tax willingly. Though I have not been afflicted with dingoes for years, I have not squealed about this paltry tax, if for no other reason because I may be afflicted with dingoes if the men settled further out do not destroy them. The farmer is told that he has had a terrible impost placed upon him, and hon. members who have created that idea come to this House to blow off steam. If they are wise men they will tell the farmer that two sheep destroyed or five sheep destroyed in a year will mean a greater loss than the dingo levy.

Mr. Thomson: With all your legislation you are not able to-day to prevent individual farmers from suffering severe losses.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We have the fund for the destruction of dingoes. The money is not being employed for any other purpose. It pays no salaries. Very little is lost in the collection of it, because it is collected through the Commissioner of Taxation. There are no administration charges on it. It is collected in the cheapest possible way, and it can be utilised only for the one purpose; and I consider that, properly utilised, it will be a blessing to the producer.

Mr. Latham: Will the Government reduce the tax this year?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: So far as I am personally concerned, no. This levy is for the protection of the producers' interests, but the people who squeal come down to Perth and buy the best motor car on the market without caring a rap if it costs £100 more because of the Customs duty. It is an extraordinary thing that these people would like to sweep out of existence a Government who pass legislation at their request to help them out of their difficulties they object to a paltry tax of, say, £1 a year, while those same people are apparently content to pay enormous taxes through the Customs. On a harvester they may pay £30 Customs duty, on a motor car £100, and on a tractor £150. Seemingly all levies not imposed by the State Government are paid willingly, while the squeal made about this infinitesimal levy for dingo destruction disturbs the whole country. I pay a higher levy than the whole of hon. members opposite.

Mr. Angelo: It is not a tax, but a contribution to a fund; and the Government ought to be asked to get on with the job of destroying the dingoes.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The only people in this country who are not squealing about the vermin tax are the pastoralists who fought their own battle and who stuck to their word in regard to this matter, who never made any complaint regarding what they had got. The only people who are squealing are the members in whose defence, or in the defence of whose constituents, 90 per cent. of the fund is expended.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: The farmers are paying different taxes, anyhow.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I will not approve of any further amendment of the Act. Let it operate and let us have some experience of it! No doubt when the next election comes along, we shall hear another war-cry because this one will have been worn out.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But we shall have another discussion on the regulations.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There will be no regulations.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There must be.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Premier has asked me to make a statement regarding the group settlement scheme and if I am a little long in my remarks, I hope hon. members will bear with me, because I do not want to make the statement again at some future time. I want to state the posi-

tion as I find it, and I do not desire to repeat it during the time I am Minister for Lands. Probably it may be necessary to make a few remarks regarding the agreement under which the group settlements were established. I will deal with that briefly so that hon. members may understand the position under the migration agreements. The first agreement was made between the British, Commonwealth and State Governments on the 9th February, 1923. It was made by the present Leader of the Opposition and was known as the Mitchell agreement. This provided for the creation of 6,000 farms in the South-West Division of the State, particularly the area between the South-West coastline and a line drawn from Bunbury on the west coast to Albany on the south coast, containing approximately 5,000,000 acres of Crown land. The farms had to be settled with migrants selected from some 75,000 new migrants to be introduced. It was eventually agreed, however, to make it purely a farm proposition by introducing migrant families for 6,000 farms. The total cost was to be £6,000,000, or £1,000 per farm, including charges for supervision. The interest on loan moneys was to be borne equally between the various Governments; namely, one-third of the cost of the loan. No provision was made for any contribution towards losses or for preparatory training. The Mitchell agreement was eventually made retrospective to the operations of the State from the 1st June, 1922. Subsequent to this agreement Victoria and New South Wales made agreements between the Commonwealth and Imperial Governments on more favourable conditions than the Mitchell agreement, and this State was promised a new agreement with not less favourable conditions than those given to Victoria and New South Wales. Considerable correspondence and negotiations ensued, and eventually the Commonwealth completed an agreement with the British Government in April, 1925, and as a result this State completed the agreement with the Commonwealth on the 19th October, 1925. This agreement provides for the introduction of migrants at the rate of one for every £75 of money granted for public works, and for every 10,000 introduced under this heading, 3,750 must be members of families of an average of five. In addition, land settlement schemes could be approved, whereby for every £1,000 a new farm shall be created, and 50 per cent. of such new farms must be allotted to migrant

families of an average of five persons. It is not implied or expressed that the £1,000 shall be the total debt charged for the making of a farm, as in the Mitchell agreement. The moneys to be loaned to the State under this agreement are at the rate of 1 per cent. interest per annum for the first five years, and for five years thereafter the total interest charges to be shared equally between the three Governments, or the State Government to be charged one-third of the rate payable in respect to the loan for the second five years. Provision was also made that two-thirds of any losses incurred in connection with the purchase of stock and equipment for an assisted migrant settled on a farm up to a maximum of £200 should be paid by the Commonwealth Government. This contribution towards losses on stock and equipment is shared by the Commonwealth and the Imperial Government, but the Imperial Government are anxious that that condition shall be altered so that the Imperial Government will pay a lump sum for all stock losses on the scheme. If that new provision is agreed to the provision for £200 will cease. There has been considerable correspondence on the question of the interest payable by extending the interest concession from £1,000 to £1,500, but that has not yet been finalised.

Mr. Thomson: Will that apply to all groups or to sell settlement?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: While we are hopeful that any new agreement will provide for the interest concession on up to £1,500 being made retrospective, I cannot say that it will do so. It is possible that provision will be made for that interest concession to operate in respect of new development. The first group settlement was established in 1921. Since then the group settlements have been controlled, under the administration of the Minister, by the Group Settlement Advisory Board, consisting of the Managing Trustee of the Agricultural Bank, the Director of Agriculture, the Superintendent of Dairying and the Accountant of the Lands Department, with the Secretary of the Group Settlement Department, as the executive officer. These gentlemen have given their best services to the scheme. They have taken upon themselves great responsibilities, and, as I discover from the files, they have had very anxious times. It is not intended that these gentlemen shall serve in that capacity much longer. Mr. McLarty's activities

are so many and so great that it is not reasonable to expect him to give proper attention to the scheme and its administration. The same applies to other members of the board. It is unfair to ask those officers to accept such responsibilities and at the same time to give their services in the offices to which they were appointed originally. It is proposed to appoint a new board and I hope to make an announcement at an early date. There has been some difficulty experienced in appointing a new board, because, although there are a number of applicants for the positions, I desire to select the most suitable board possible. I desire that we shall have a board capable of understanding the scheme, with practical experience in settlement in the South-West, understanding the position from the dairying standpoint, and able to give encouragement and assistance to the settlers, so as to help towards the ultimate realisation of the scheme.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Therefore, you will maintain the connection of the dairying expert with the Board?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not know yet.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Not on results to date, I hope?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I think there should be some connection between the old board and the new board. The latter should know on what lines the old board proceeded. If that is not done and the new Board make a departure from the policy, it might be fatal to the scheme and occasion loss to both the State and the settlers. I cannot say who will receive appointment, but we want a member of the Board who will be a practical South-West man, who has been associated with the dairy industry. The total number of groups, including the four that have been amalgamated, is 136, while the number of applications for locations was 5,839. Those who failed to report for inclusion when notified, totalled 451, while 1,068 were deferred as unsuitable. The number sent to the various groups totalled 4,320. Those who have left the group settlements, as the Premier pointed out recently, totalled 2,146, while those dismissed numbered 126, giving a total of 2,272, who have left the groups. Group holdings now total 2,382 and the number of settlers remaining on the groups, 2,048. There are 334 vacancies, which are being reserved for the purposes

of reconstruction. Settlers are not being accepted now for groups, because it is not desirable to place any more at this stage when, under the policy of reconstruction, the Government have to find vacancies for a large number of settlers. The Premier said the other night that it seemed some part of the unemployed difficulty was due to settlers who had left the groups. I think there can hardly be any dispute regarding that point. No doubt hon. members have met men throughout the country who have been on the groups. There is no doubt also that a big percentage of the unemployed now looking for work were once on the group settlements, and when they left they were thrown on the labour market. Some of them want to go back, because they find the world even colder outside than they found it when on the groups.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: Some of them are fairly serious on the matter, too.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Premier was questioned the other night as to the improbability of his statement being correct. I will give the House some instances. On Group 111 there have been seven different occupants on one location. On Group 51 there have been six different settlers on one block; on Group 85, five different occupants; on Group 44, four different occupants. Glancing down the list I see records of six different occupants, 4, 5, 7, and 6, and so on. In that statement alone there is evidence that locations have been occupied by quite a number of settlers, and those settlers have abandoned the locations after remaining there for short periods. I do not say that that has been the fault of the settlers. It may have been that of the locations, or of the administration. I merely state the facts. When I state that 2,272 settlers have left the groups, that furnishes full justification for the statement of the Premier, because those people have to seek work elsewhere throughout the country. The group settlement scheme was started in 1921 when seven groups were established. In 1922, 36 groups were established; in 1923, 51; in 1924, 35; in 1925, 2; in 1926, 1; and during the early months of this year, four were established. That gives a total of 136 groups. The settlers now on sustenance number 15. They are new settlers who have gone on to blocks abandoned by former settlers. Being inexperienced they have to be put on sustenance

payments for a few months until they gain some experience of group working. The settlers on group piece work total 717, while those on individual piece work number 1,316, or a total of 2,048. The expenditure on the groups to the 30th June last shows that on the Peel Estate for settlement and development £889,556 has been required. That does not include roads or drainage. On roads on the Peel Estate there has been expended £234,759, while the amount spent on drainage is £521,639, or a total cost, including the purchase price, development, roads and drainage, of nearly two million pounds.

Member: How many blocks are there on that estate?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: After the reconstruction about 240. On the Busselton groups there has been expended on development £1,617,649. The estimated cost of drainage is £205,000, and the expenditure on drainage is £95,000. The total expenditure to date on the Busselton groups has been £1,700,000. The Manjimup groups have cost £759,150, the Denmark groups £278,149, and the Northcliffe groups £445,745, or a total expenditure, exclusive of roads and drainage, of £4,650,000.

Mr. Thomson: Is that inclusive of the Peel Estate?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have shown that the total expenditure on the Peel Estate was nearly £2,000,000; so it will be seen that the aggregate expenditure on group settlement has been about £6,000,000. I am giving these figures because hon. members have been calculating on what is regarded as cheap money. I am not going to say anything about the possibilities of the future, but I think the House is entitled to this information. The first group was started in Manjimup in 1921 with 20 holdings; the cost to date of developing holdings on early groups has ranged from £2,384 to £2,724 each.

Mr. J. H. Smith: But at that time all the big timber was taken out.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: A great portion of it. After that experience the groups in process of establishment since 1922 at Manjimup and Busselton have been developed at a cost to date ranging from £1,930 to £2,500. In 1923 further groups were established, their costs to date ranging from £1,300 to £2,000. The cost to date of developing locations in 1924 ranged from £1,000 to £1,600. As the

result of earlier experience, as the later groups were established the costs were lower. I should like to think that those groups at Manjimup, whose development cost £2,700, were established and fully productive. However, that time is not yet, although I have great hopes of them. I should like to say the same thing about the groups at Busselton, costing from £2,000 to £2,500, but again I am afraid that it cannot be said they are by any means established. Reasons for this will be put forward by members who conclude that they ought to defend their own territory. Some of the reasons they will give may be correct, but I hope those members will not be guilty of extravagant language in an attempt to justify conditions that cannot be justified on the facts. It is of no use saying that the administration has been at fault throughout, although of course there may have been points of administration open to criticism, such as friction. However, that cannot have obtained all along the line, and I feel that the fundamental causes are not to be ignored. Under the heading of "Comparative group expenditure, including all improvements," it is found that on the Peel Estate £889,556 has been expended on 492 holdings. Exclusive of buildings the cost has been £733,482. At Abba River it is £149,432, and at Jardee £104,407. Members know the reason for this expenditure, and will only require to be told how the development has progressed, what area of land has been cleared, and the number of stock carried.

Mr. Thomson: How many blocks do you estimate there will be on the Peel Estate?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The estimated number will be reduced by about one-half. To arrive at the cost I have had a few averages worked out. Under the heading "The average pasture area established and the expenditure for the whole" I find that on a number of groups in the Abba River district established in 1922 the expenditure has been £1,989 for an average pasture developed of 33 acres, or a cost of £60 per acre. In the same locality, on a group established in 1924, the expenditure was £1,667, or £64 per acre.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Does not that include buildings or stock?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It includes everything but stock. I asked the accountant to give me the figures show-

ing what it has cost to establish settlers to date, on which, of course, the value of the holdings must be based. He has given me these figures. On 10 groups established in 1922 with 194 holdings the average acreage of pasture was 33 acres with a total cost of £1,989, or £60 per acre. I am at a loss to understand the high cost on groups established in 1924, unless it was due to the poor quality of the land. At all events, I am convinced that attempts have been made to establish pasture on land that in the Eastern States, where some land is worth £70 per acre, would not be considered even poor land. It is a fatuous thing for any person, because he lives in a given State, to say that all the land in that State is good land. There is good land in this State and there is bad land in this State, just as there is in every other country in the world. I am satisfied that the officers have made determined attempts to establish pastures. It has involved heavy expenditure, and the want of success is not due to the administration as some people urge, but due largely to the fact that the land has not responded to the cultivation and the fertilisers. I am not going to say that in the initial stages all of the cultivation was good. I am prepared to admit that an endeavour has been made to force production and get people established, regardless of sound methods to produce pastures before the land was ready for it. But that had been repaired by my former colleague, Mr. Angwin. The officers have seen that it is impossible to establish pastures without proper cultivation. Even with proper cultivation the result in several localities has not been very hopeful. In the North Margaret-Busselton district the developing of 39 acres of pasture, including buildings, fencing and equipment cost £2,656. That was on groups established in 1921. The average was £68 per acre of pasture established. On nine groups established in 1922 the development of 29 acres of pasture including buildings, fencing, etc., cost £2,138, or an average of £73 per acre. In 1923 the cost amounted to £80 per acre. Hon. members will see that an earnest endeavour has been made to get results by the expenditure of money in cultivation. In the Manjimup area, on a group established in 1921, the development, which included all costs, works out at £80 per acre of pasture. As the member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith)

remarked, an attempt was made there to clear the land beyond the necessary stage, and so the expenditure was heavy. In my opinion there is every hope of ultimate success in the Manjimup area. It is a magnificent belt of country.

Mr. J. H. Smith: It is the pick of the South-West.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If I were a young man wanting land I would have no hesitation in trying my luck in that district. In the Northcliffe area not much result has been achieved on the plain country. On the Peel Estate the development on eight groups averaged £34 per acre of pasture. Those groups were established in 1922. On 15 groups established in 1923 the development cost £43 per acre of pasture established, and in 1924 it was £33 per acre. Last year assistance ceased to 36 settlers on the Peel Estate. Of these 13 retired. I know at least one man down there who is doing very well. He told me he was all right. However, other settlers have been making demands for sustenance to tide them over temporary difficulties. We have had to render assistance to several. At Denmark the cost of development ranged from £60 to £70 per acre of pasture established. I am surprised at that, for I had great expectations that, with the experience of the older settlers, that country might have been brought into development and under pasture at a much lower cost. As development proceeds the costs will be lower. In many localities, particularly in the karri and red-gum country, in the Margaret River-Augusta area and in the districts of Jardee to Manjimup and Pemberton, I consider the prospects are very good and have no doubt that if the people stick to their property, receive reasonable assistance and take a proper view of their responsibilities, the scheme should work out successfully. The comparative cost of fertiliser to bring the good land into production contrasted with the poorer land is worthy of note. At Jardee, which is first-class land, the cost of fertiliser per acre has been £1 14s. 11d., whereas on the poorer country of the Peel Estate it has been £3 6s. 7d. Consequently, in addition to the difficulty of bringing the poorer land into production, the settler is faced with a heavy annual cost for fertiliser. He is called upon to pay twice as much for fertiliser to establish his pasture, and when it is established it will not be nearly so good



as the pasture established on good country at less expense. As a further instance, the cost of seed and fertiliser on the first-class land at Jardee averaged £2 6s. 3d. per acre, whereas the cost of fertiliser and seed at South Busselton and Northcliffe has been £4 to £7 per acre. There is a big margin from which it is evident that the good land is responding at a lower cost. It requires less fertiliser, and from it the best results will be obtained. The poorer land will have to be built up and the cost of building it up, in my opinion, will be unduly heavy. I do not wish to make any personal references, but the Leader of the Opposition the other night stated that I was opposed to South-West development. I do not think he meant that; I think he was angry at something I had said and made a hasty reference just as I occasionally do. I saw the land on the Peel Estate and in the Busselton area and if I know anything at all about land—good land speaks for itself and it is not difficult to tell good from bad land—I am satisfied that the settlers on those areas will find it very hard to make ends meet. It is not the type of land on which to place inexperienced settlers with the object of establishing farms. The attitude I adopted at the beginning I adhere to now. Group settlement is designed not for building up soil, but for making producers of the men within a reasonable space of time. It is the function of the Department of Agriculture to build up soil and to show how poor land may be built up. If there are men of means who wish to experiment in this direction, they may do so. My contention is that the settlers should be put on reasonably good land and if, with reasonable assistance, they cannot make good, the fault will rest with them. Personally I would not settle on portion of the land of the Peel Estate where people have been settled, and I certainly would not go on the land in the Busselton area. I would not think of it, and what I would not do myself, I am not prepared to ask others to do. I am not by any means opposed to South-West development. I consider that there are great possibilities of development in the South-West provided a considerable sum of money is expended and time is given to the country to produce. Attempts have been made to force the country to produce. Although nature can be aided by the use of fertilisers and other artificial means, it cannot be forced beyond its capac-

ity, even with those aids. An attempt has been made to force the country and the country cannot be forced beyond its capacity. Though pasture will be established there ultimately, and on good land in a reasonable time, it will be some years before we get the volume of pasture and the abundant growth that will support cattle and maintain a family in reasonable prosperity. Some of the mistakes made have been made by zealous officials in order to get results within a short space of time, but to do that is impossible. It has been said by the Leader of the Opposition that the land for the group settlements has been more carefully selected than has land in any other part of the State. Well, it may have been, but I should not like to say much for the selector. I should not care, either, to use the selectors to do any more selecting of land. I have read carefully the evidence given before the Royal Commission on Group Settlement in 1925. After the experience of some years, the report is worth perusal.

Mr. Lindsay: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Mr. H. H. Smith, one of the witnesses, is a settler whose place I visited recently. He is not a group settler. In my opinion his land is much better than that of the group settlers. Mr. Smith has been established there for 11 years.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Where is he?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In the Abba River area.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Almost adjoining the Abba River.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Mr. Smith, in evidence, said—

To secure a reasonable living I consider that 300 acres of land are necessary. If that area were fully developed one could run 50 cows there all the year round.

The group blocks are much smaller than that. Mr. Smith is a successful settler who is known to hon. members.

Mr. Barnard: He milked 80 cows on 100 acres.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I saw his country and compared it with that of the groups and I know that his is greatly superior to the bulk of the land comprised in the adjacent group settlements. Mr. Smith also said—

To go in for dairying properly a man requires 50 cows. He might make a bare living with 30 cows, but he would have to go in for pigs and poultry also.

I agree with him. Members are probably aware that in the Eastern States the average dairy farmer has 40 to 60 cows. On the north coast 60 cows is by no means a big herd. If our group settlers are going to carry on successfully as dairy farmers they cannot do so on the basis of 10 or 15 cows. They might be established on a 15-cow basis and make a living, with some help from the Agricultural Bank, but before they become properly established they must be able to milk 20 cows all the year round. The officials are assured that the locations of some of the group settlers will not maintain 20 cows in milk throughout the year. Mr. Smith also said—

Banksia and scrub land, provided it is drained, will provide some feed, but it is not good land. I regard it as third-class. The swampy parts of it are capable of producing summer fodder, but some of the land causes the grass to dry up. I do not think the soil will retain the moisture even by ploughing and cultivating. . . . I do not think the group settlers have a sufficient area. In some instances two blocks should be knocked into one so that the settler may have a fair chance of making a living. The holdings would then work out at about 300 acres each.

I regard Mr. Smith's evidence as sound evidence based on the results of his experience. Mr. Hugh Brockman was one of the gentlemen who selected the land for the group settlements.

Mr. Mann: He has had long experience.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He may have had. I shall not say anything about that, but shall quote his evidence. He said—

Three years ago I would have regarded some of the light land that has been opened up as useless, but when I saw what the Spaniards had done on the land, I changed my views. They had fine crops of potatoes, while vines, grass and fruit trees were flourishing as well.

Mr. Brockman, on his own statement, considered the land was useless until he saw what the Spaniards were doing and that caused him to change his mind. Let us see what the Spaniards did. Jose Pifferer, of the Spanish settlement, said—

I took up my homestead block of 160 acres 15 years ago. My total is now 420 acres. I worked hard at the start, working three days for myself and three days for a neighbour who provided me with board and lodging. . . . During the first six months I got nothing but pumpkins to eat, and during the second six months nothing but turnips. That was not much for a man to work on, but as pumpkin fattens pigs it was all right. The work was pretty rough. . . . I do not believe that 95

per cent. of the men here could have gone through what I have.

Did Mr. Brockman expect that group settlers would live on pumpkins or turnips for half the year? The Spaniards came from a country where living conditions were pretty hard and after coming here, by living in that manner, they were able slowly and laboriously to build up their land. Was it reasonable on Mr. Brockman's part to recommend putting on similar land group settlers who had had neither the training nor the experience that the Spaniards had had? Group settlers would not tolerate such conditions as the price of successful settlement.

Mr. J. H. Smith: But the group settlers get sustenance as well.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The same witness added—

I never have a penny of my own, for all the wages I earn and anything I make out of the place I put back into the property.

Mr. Richardson: That man would not work too hard if he lived for six months on pumpkin.

Mr. Lindsay: That is what I said.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: People who come from countries where the scale of living is low, who have had to put up with hardships from childhood, who get no support from the Government and who have to pay heavy taxation may find this country a sort of paradise and do reasonably well in it.

Mr. Richardson: I think he was booming himself a bit.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He may have been, but we cannot expect and this community will not allow settlement in this country where the settlers have to put up with such conditions as that Spaniard spoke of.

Mr. Barnard: He never did it, though,

Hon. W. D. Johnson: His land was better than the Abba River land in any case.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Mr. Prowse, a farmer in the vicinity of Capel, said in his evidence—

The Spaniards are on good land. They make a living growing crops and making wine. They are not engaged in dairying apart from the fact that they will milk a cow or two for themselves. Their land is better than group settlers' blocks. My statement refers to Groups 14, 15, 16, and part of 34.

That witness said that the Spaniards' land was even better than the land the group settlers had. I have seen the Spaniards' land and I admit that they have a fair pro-

erty. It has been laboriously fertilised and worked for 15 years. Any settler who is prepared to live under such hard conditions as these people, can produce similar results on almost any reasonable quality land, provided it has sufficient rainfall, and provided he puts in sufficient organic manure, and works laboriously for a long period. If he does these things he will probably build up a property. Group settlers, however, are not expected to do this, and the country cannot afford to keep settlers going for 16 years, and maintain them on the present standard merely so that they may effect a result such as has been achieved by the Spaniards. Mr. Richardson, the late Controller of Group Settlement, said to the Advisory Board—

The Abba River settlement would be disbanded in October, 1925, with an approximate capitalisation of £1,249, with further departmental assistance in purchase of cows £120, sowing five acres of maize £25, emergencies £50. The total capital cost could be safely put at £1,394. The Minister approved of the disbanding of the group, settlers to be supplied with the cows and no further financial assistance to be given. This course was carried out, the settlers were supplied with ten cows and practically all repossessed.

The capital cost in the case of group established in 1921 between May and November may now be said to be £2,700. The settlers were supplied with ten cows apiece but were not able to make good with them. The pastures were eaten out before they were firmly established. I think this attempt at disbandment was a set back for the group. Fodder was available in the spring months, but there was no quantity of it and later the cows starved. In any case, the stock destroyed the pasture and threw back the settlement. There was also mortality amongst the stock, and the cows being in poor condition, their progeny was depreciated. This attempt was a bad thing for the scheme. I think the late Mr. Richardson was unduly optimistic. He always stuck out that the land was all right, but I think later he became rather concerned about it. The officials came to the conclusion that the country had, after all, not lived up to expectations. Mr. Richardson certainly endeavoured to make the most of what appeared to be a bad job, and do his duty by the State. As the result of the rather doleful report presented by Mr. Pullin, the Minister took action. Mr. Richardson had died, and it was decided to reconstruct some

of the groups. Mr. Pullin was supervisor in the Busselton area, and in December last he drew attention to the unsatisfactory nature of the groups of which he was in charge. The Minister, Mr. Angwin, decided upon reconstruction. On the Peel Estate 42 holdings were reconstituted and reduced to 16. On the Abba River settlement on the 26th January of this year, 81 holdings were reconstituted and reduced to 51. This was the first reconstruction. In December, in Groups 37 and 39 large areas of second-class land were totally abandoned. In the case of Groups 14, 15, 16 and 32 on the Abba River, a reduction was made by linking up existing holdings with a few abandonments. Mr. Pullin later drew attention to the South Busselton groups, which are distinct from the Abba River group. He said he would have drawn attention to the necessity for reconstituting these groups at the same time as the Abba River group, but he then thought that the blocks might have a reasonable chance and that some of the settlers were going to make good. Mr. Pullin was called to Perth to discuss the matter and the attention of the Minister was drawn to it. The minute of the Minister is as follows:—

No buildings to be erected. This is a surprise to me. If these holdings were doubtful attention should have been called to same before this and it means loss of time and waste of money. Surely the position was known at time of Abba River. I must have these settled within three weeks. Please bring plan showing these lots. Are any of them near the drain that I drew attention to as poor land but was assured was all right when visiting? I am disappointed at the delay. I might add that it appears the areas are not receiving the supervision they should. Otherwise cottages would not have been erected and the land condemned some time ago.

It was evident that Mr. Angwin was very worried over the position. Writing on the Abba River block on 27th January, Mr. Pullin said—

To provide on the 20-cow units, I take it, there should be sufficient feed in sight for at least 30 head of cattle, assuming of course that a cow unit is the cow and female progeny. If this is so, I believe that there are very few holdings in the areas mentioned which will carry that number of cattle. Abba River is not unlike a great insensate machine that must be continually fed so long as its insatiable appetite called for sacrifice of time and money.

Mr. Pullin adopted what he thought to be the proper attitude. The Board then decided that the groups should be reconsti-

tuted, and Mr. Pullin was asked to make a reclassification. He was not too sure of himself, and asked for assistance. He suggested Mr. Harold Carter, or Mr. Reynolds, or Mr. Forrest. Eventually Mr. Carter was appointed, and his report makes doleful reading. It does not hold out much hope for the success of the settlers as dairy farmers. If some of the blocks could be utilised for growing potatoes and they were heavily fertilised, and intense culture were undertaken upon them, pastures might grow later on. As a result of these experiences, I think it would be very unwise to continue longer with these particular groups. A certain amount of money has been expended on them, but very little result has been achieved. We have reached the stage when we cannot find any profitable work for the settlers to do there. It is the same thing on part of the Peel Estate and the sandhills there. The settlers cannot make a living on the blocks; I do not see how they can do so. I would not have cared to lightly take this step but for the unanimous opinion of the Advisory Board, which has been associated with the groups right through. In the beginning the board was hopeful of success. Had it not been for their present view I should have hesitated to take the action I have taken. In the interests of the State, however, the reconstitution has to be made. I do not say that the country which has been abandoned will not ultimately be capable of producing something. Sooner or later every acre of land we have, when sufficient population is here, and there is sufficient wealth, will be brought into use. In this case we are not soil building, but building up a group settlement population. We are building up producers, but we cannot do so on doubtful areas in the time that the State can afford to meet the liability. The settlers cannot make a livelihood on these particular groups. We had hopes that by the end of the year quite a number of settlers would have reached the 15-cow stage, and might then have been put upon the Agricultural Bank. Now many of the officials are doubtful about that. In the circumstances I felt this was the only step I could take. As Minister for Lands I could not have proceeded optimistically with land settlement on this basis. Had the Government not decided upon reconstruction I do not think I could have gone on with any feeling of satisfaction spending money with

the outlook as black as it is and with the experience of the past six years. No doubt I shall be condemned in some quarters for taking this step; at all events, I expect to receive no credit for doing so. I feel, however, that I should be lacking in my duty to the State if I did not do as I have done.

Mr. Griffiths: You are certainly getting credit for having courage.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It may be said that I have struck a blow to the group settlement scheme, but it is in the interests of the scheme that action has been taken. When the State has a greater population and more wealth and can turn its attention to soil improvement, and can afford to stand behind settlers for a number of years, no doubt the abandoned holdings will be taken in hand successfully. I know that poor land has been settled in other parts of the world. It has been put to use when the necessity demanded, and when the population and wealth were there to warrant it. When that times arrives in Western Australia, there is no doubt this land will be brought into production, but not in our day and generation. The proposed reductions are as follows:—on the Peel Estate from 475 to 246, on the Busselton area from 240 to 150, on the North Margaret area from 290 to 280. There will not be necessity for much amalgamation on the good areas, except to make some of the blocks larger. A proportion of the blocks contain only 60 acres, which is not sufficient for a man and his family. In one case we have arrived at the stage where the settler has done all his improvements and there is nothing more for him to do.

Mr. J. H. Smith: But he has never yet had a chance to farm. He has not yet had machinery. He has been clearing all the time.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I arrived at one place where the settler has his pasture down and his improvements made, but has not reached the stage where the pasture will maintain a sufficient number of stock to give him a living. It will take a number of years to establish the volume of pasture. In the good areas that volume will be established, and in the end there will be abundant pasture so long as the farmer provides for the summer, as he can do in the swamps. In that case there will not be much difficulty for the future. I do not consider, however, an area of 60 acres to be big enough. Even in the Eastern States 60 acres is not looked upon as a reasonable

dairy farm. The settler must be given a reasonable area, and the knowledge that in making provision for himself on the farm he is also making provision for his family. On the Abba River the reduction in holdings will be from 240 to 150, in the Pemberton district from 364 to 334, in Northcliffe from 374 to 244. As regards Denmark, which has not yet been visited, I am given to understand that the great majority of the blocks are sound. It has been said that the sand plain country can be brought into cultivation. However, I have seen similar country in my own homeland. I know of great stretches of such country, comprising probably a million acres. The land in the neighbourhood is worth £70 per acre and the district has a population of 100,000, but the country in question has never yet been cultivated or settled. I do not think there is the necessary quantity of soil in the sand plains, and certainly there is not the subsoil to enable any great volume of production unless the land is built up by organic manure. The cost of drainage to make that land cultivable is estimated at £100,000, and may amount to £200,000; and I am not prepared to commit the Government to any further expenditure in that connection. I believe the great majority of settlers there are satisfied that the country will not make good. Although I confess the member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith) has to defend his own constituency, I hope he will not speak unreasonably of the Government's action there. We made every possible investigation; and our own officers, like the settlers, are convinced that the country cannot make good. Therefore, in my opinion, we should abandon the plain proposition, leaving it to another generation. The other day I saw a letter written by one of the old settlers in that district, named Mottram, I think, who called the group administration, bunglers; but from what I can see, none of the old settlers has given a lead himself.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Mottram has not given much of a lead.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Although Mr. Mottram said the Government should have taken the advice of old settlers, there were no old settlers from whom the Government could ask advice, because the old settlers had never taken the time and trouble to grasp the great opportunities which Mr. Mottram says exist there now. I have already told hon. members that the loss on the scheme owing to reclassification will amount

to about £750,000. I fear—and I want to be plain about this—that the loss will eat up any concession we get in respect of interest. If we bear the loss—which I hope we shall not do ultimately—we shall not be able to call this cheap money, because the loss will be equal to the interest concession, which amounts to about £800,000. Our loss will be about £750,000 if use can be made of the buildings, equipment, and fencing on the blocks to be abandoned. I am not yet prepared to say that the average group settler will come out right from an expenditure point of view, but I do not think we ought to maintain the scheme. In my opinion, we should make the loss a first loss and try to consolidate the position. The member for Sussex (Mr. Barnard) asked me, through a question, by whom the areas were to be reclassified. The field officers ought to have sufficient experience for that. They have experimented on that country for five years, and are in direct contact with it. If they do not know, who could know? If the hon. member knew, I would be glad of his advice; but, so far as I know, he has never farmed an acre of country.

Member: He farmed the farmers.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If he could give me advice I would be glad to have it, but I do want to get the advice of men experienced in the district. On the Peel Estate Mr. Faulkner is the supervisor, and Mr. Max Law is a settler in the Serpentine area.

Mr. J. H. Smith. He got a lot of the group stock.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not know that. Mr. Law and Mr. Briggs, another old settler on the estate, are checking Mr. Faulkner's reclassification; and I hope to get independent men also to check the reclassification in the other groups. I hope the House will not put on me the responsibility of reclassification. I have not the local knowledge though I possess some knowledge of land and have had some experience of it. The officers connected with the scheme have done their best to make the groups produce. There has been no complaint against them in this House. On the contrary, it has been stated that they are good officers. Provided we get a few experienced local men, we ought to have a reasonable check; and that is the best I can do in the circumstances. The cows purchased for the groups in this State number

6,554, and 1,614 were imported from the Eastern States. The cost of the imported cows in the Eastern States was £4 11s. 3d. per head, and the landing costs and so forth amounted to £9 15s. per head, making a total of £14 6s. 3d. I may explain that the cows coming from New South Wales had to be maintained in quarantine for three months, looked after and fed. There was also the cost of freight and attendance. The number of bulls purchased is 244, all first-class stock. I doubt whether any settlers in any area in Australia have had so much assistance with regard to stock as our settlers had in respect of these bulls, which will assist in breeding up stock.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What was the total cost of the cattle?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Nearly £100,000, not including the bulls. There has been a fair percentage of mortality on the stock owing, I think, to their being put on the pastures too early. On the Peel Estate for the year ended February, 1927, the total number of cows and heifers was 4,205, and the deaths number 250, equal to 6 per cent. In the Busselton area the deaths amount to 5 per cent. I attribute the higher percentage of deaths in the other part of the State to the fact of the cattle having been put on the pastures too early. On the Peel Estate there has been a heavy mortality in horses, equal to 19½ per cent. This also is due, in my opinion, to the horses having been put on the pastures too early and pulling up the scanty grass with sand. The loss may, to some extent, be due to neglect on the part of settlers; and the officials must bear portion of the blame. The total number of cows held by settlers on the groups at the 30th June last was 6,402, and the number of unallotted cows was 990. At the same date the settlers held 3,464 heifers, and 421 were unallotted. The unallotted stock are largely stock which the department have been called upon to repossess, because the pastures would not maintain them. Owing to the reconstitution now taking place, the department may have to repossess a considerable number of cattle this year. On the Peel Estate the department were compelled to repossess 542 cows last year, and in the Busselton area 195, making a total of 737 cows repossessed, besides 59 young heifers.

Mr. Thomson: Through the settlers not having sufficient pasture?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. Some of the stock have been repossessed, because settlers who had reached the 15-cow stage were put off the scheme. On the Peel Estate 36 settlers reached the 15-cow stage, and of these settlers 18 left. I regret to say that they made use of the cows in the flush period, and that when it came to buying feed for the cattle they left the groups to seek more profitable occupation elsewhere. The cattle on the Peel Estate had been grazed on the coast hills, and I do not think that did them much good. Now we are removing 200 of these to Upper Capel and 200 to Ferguson. Current expenses per week on the Peel Estate amount to £120.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Expenditure by the department?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes.

Mr. J. H. Smith: To keep the stock alive?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, to look after and feed them. In the Busselton area, where we have our own country, the expenses on the cattle are £21 17s. per week. I am not going to say anything further regarding group settlement matters beyond stressing the fact that the House is entitled to the statement I have made, and I am expected to make it in view of recent happenings. So far as I can see, I believe the difficulties attached to the scheme have arisen firstly, because much of the land settled was unsuitable. That has been proved by experience. Settlers were coming here in large numbers and land had to be found for them. Much of the land we propose to abandon is, in my opinion, unsuitable for group settlement conditions. The fact that we take settlers, many of whom know nothing about the business, and train them, represents a difficulty great enough in itself, but add to that difficulty the settling of those people on poor or bad country that will not produce pastures within a reasonable time, and the task becomes beyond the capacity of any administration to cope with and support. There may have been maladministration; that is bound to occur. We cannot operate a scheme of this character, and endeavour to bring into production large areas of new country, without experiencing trouble, without some loss, extravagance and maladministration. I believe the greater number of the officials have

done their best in the circumstances. My former colleague, Mr. Angwin, was heart and soul with this scheme and he did his utmost to make it a success. It may be asked why he did not discover the weakness in the scheme earlier. Had he done so, I do not know that he would have been justified in taking the course I have followed because, the State having adopted the scheme, he had to try it out. I admit that, in my opinion, the report of the Royal Commission, was fairly sound. It might have been wise, had notice been taken of the recommendations of the Commission.

Mr. Marshall: What about the minority report?

Mr. Lindsay: It would have been wiser had the House been allowed to discuss it two years ago.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not know. A former Government having put the people on the land, and incurred the expense, it was reasonable that the Minister in charge should continue the experiment and try it out. It has now been tested over a number of years and in the interests of the country it is not wise to continue on the same lines in some of the areas. I am convinced there was undue haste in putting migrants on some of the holdings, but apparently it was difficult to get land. There is a conflict between the Forests Department and the Lands Department. The Forests Department holds the best of the country.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: And I hope they will stick to it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: When one hears the Conservator's point of view, it has to be admitted that it is reasonable.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Mr. Kessell discussed this matter with me and it is difficult to disagree with the soundness of his contentions. Whether he is correct in his assertions, time will demonstrate. In some circumstances the Government had to take the poorer class of country, and I believe that much of the failure has been due to that fact. Heavy expenditure has been incurred because of inexperience in developmental work. As one hon. member pointed out, it is easy to allow for that consideration. There has been improper tillage. No man who scratches land for the purpose of rushing in a crop, can expect to get good results. The land should be sweetened and the poorer the country, the more attention it requires. Re-

sults cannot be expected without preparation, and that is seen even in the good country.

Mr. J. H. Smith: That is so.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have instructed that proper cultivation must be proceeded with. I have told them that even where pastures have been established on land ploughed once, the land must be ploughed again.

Mr. J. H. Smith: It will do no harm.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is so. There has been too much over-stocking and that has brought about bad results. As to the want of drainage, I consider the land should have been drained before settlement was proceeded with; I do not know why that was not done. The result of the methods employed has meant that settlers have been flooded out, and some of the blocks have been under water for practically two-thirds of the year. The drainage that has been carried out has been costly, and that undertaken at the Peel Estate is not yet satisfactory. When heavy gales are experienced the water banks up and some of our best locations are under water for weeks at a time. Although I admit I have no experience in engineering, I cannot see how that difficulty can be overcome. I believe the Engineer-in-Chief is going into that matter now. As a matter of fact, we have seen some of that country under water during the last few days. I have to inform hon. members that the decision in favour of reconstruction was arrived at unanimously by the board. They decided on reconstruction along the lines adopted by the Government. I recognise that it was a heavy responsibility for Government and officers to undertake. I submit that the officers did not arrive at their decision without proper experience and investigation. Whatever decision they arrived at was only reached after they had done their best and I believe their action will meet with the commendation of the House.

Mr. Thomson: Was this matter discussed with the Federal Development and Migration Commission?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, I discussed it with Mr. Amery and one other and they told me that they had expected it. They told me that they had been under the impression that there would be 200 affected. I do not think it will give rise to misunderstanding because similar experiences have been encountered all over Australia. We

have had our experience and will probably profit by it.

Mr. Thomson: The point is that the people you mention, having concurred in the move, we may get some different terms.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am not going to say anything about that. I shall not discuss their attitude on the point because they have not given me their opinions beyond saying that they expected something of the sort. They assured me, however, that it would not make any difference so far as Great Britain was concerned. Mr. Thomson, a member of the Overseas Settlement Committee, was introduced to me by Sir Hal Colebatch and after we had discussed this matter he informed me that in his opinion it would not mean much in the Old Country as these things were expected from time to time. In these circumstances I do not think it will do this State much harm.

Mr. Thomson: The main thing is that the scheme shall be made successful.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The main thing is to establish the settlers on good country. We must abandon the poorer country because the expense is too great and because the land will not give results. The original proposal, as hon. members will understand, was to disband groups on the 10-cow basis. We raised that basis to 15 cows. There is hope when the settlers reach that basis, they will be able to carry on with reasonable assistance from the Agricultural Bank, such as is extended to other settlers under similar conditions.

Mr. J. H. Smith: You do not mean a 15-cow basis and full profits?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes.

Mr. J. H. Smith: You must have 10 cows with something coming in now.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Mr. Sutton advocated 20 cows.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There must be mixed farming, with pigs and so on.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, but the basis of their operations must be dairying. Whatever they get apart from that, will be to the personal advantage of the individual settler. Having done that, we shall try to procure facilities for the marketing of their products. It is too early for me to say anything about the land administration because I do not know much about it yet. During my tour of the groups I was almost overwhelmed with complaints. I am prepared

to say that I saw amongst the grouppees as fine a body of settlers as could be found anywhere in this State. Many of those men gave me great heart. I had complaints regarding some settlers not doing their best, but such complaints had reference to a minority. I will not say that there is any distinction to be noticed between the migrants and the Australians, and I saw among the settlers men most anxious and determined to make good. I am sure they will make good. I was particularly struck with some settlers from the Old Country. They were most determined to succeed and to have their own farms established as soon as possible. I know they will succeed. I know there is a great chance of success among those beautiful valleys represented by the member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith).

Mr. J. H. Smith: A great proportion of them will be all right.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But it will take time. If we can establish more farms in that country we will do good for Western Australia. Although I received a great many complaints, I think they were tried on me because I was a new Minister. Some of those complaints were justified, but at any rate large numbers of the settlers gave me great hope and encouragement. I saw a settler who had formerly been an engineer on a boat trading out from Liverpool. He was an elderly man with a grown-up family. From some of the settlers I had received complaints that they had no time on which to build sheds to house their stock, and they wanted the Government to assist in that work. On the other hand, this settler I refer to had a magnificent holding that was well looked after and he had found time to split the timber into slabs and build fine sheds for his stock. Some of them had been beautifully thatched with rushes from the creeks, so that the place reminded one of the old English farm buildings. His stock was in good condition and the holding was well conducted. What that man can do, other settlers can do if they only have the will to do it. I believe this scheme will take some years to try out. In the better class country particularly, every year should see it nearer to success. I do not think it will be reached for some few years; it will take time. The country must be sweetened, the ground must be correctly tilled; time must be allowed to elapse before they secure that acreage of pastures adequate to prosperously keep a dairy herd.



That time will come and, bearing in mind that there are many men and women on the groups who have their hearts in the scheme, and are determined to persevere and hang on till they reach their goal, I have every faith that the scheme will prove good for the country and for the future of Western Australia. I hope that while I am Minister for Lands members of the Opposition will not reproach me with being antagonistic to the South-West. Apart from any views I may hold as to where money can best be spent in the interests of the State, as giving the quickest return, where the settler can secure the speediest results, my duty is to expedite that group settlement entrusted to me by the Government; and if I can bring that scheme nearer to its ultimate success, I shall have done my bit for this country.

**MR. J. H. SMITH** (Nelson) [9.31]: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

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

|                  |    |    |    |    |    |
|------------------|----|----|----|----|----|
| Ayes             | .. | .. | .. | .. | 13 |
| Noes             | .. | .. | .. | .. | 18 |
|                  |    |    |    |    | —  |
| Majority against | .. |    |    |    | 5  |
|                  |    |    |    |    | —  |

#### AYES.

|               |                    |
|---------------|--------------------|
| Mr. Angelo    | Sir James Mitchell |
| Mr. Barnard   | Mr. North          |
| Mr. Davy      | Mr. J. H. Smith    |
| Mr. Ferguson  | Mr. J. M. Smith    |
| Mr. Griffiths | Mr. Thomson        |
| Mr. Maley     | Mr. Richardson     |
| Mr. Mann      |                    |

(Teller.)

#### NOES.

|                   |                   |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| Mr. Chesson       | Mr. Millington    |
| Mr. Clydesdale    | Mr. Munro         |
| Mr. Corboy        | Mr. Rowe          |
| Mr. Cunningham    | Mr. Sleeman       |
| Mr. W. D. Johnson | Mr. Troy          |
| Mr. Kenneally     | Mr. A. Wansbrough |
| Mr. Kennedy       | Mr. Willcock      |
| Mr. Lutey         | Mr. Withers       |
| Mr. Marshall      | Mr. Panton        |

(Teller.)

Question thus negatived.

**MR. J. H. SMITH** (Nelson) [9.35]: First of all I want to say how deeply I regret the defeat of Col. Denton, the ex-member for Moore, although I congratulate his successor and trust that his experience in the House will be pleasant. I believe I am echoing the sentiments of every member, wherever he may sit, when I say that the

loss of Col. Denton from this Chamber is a severe one to the country. He indeed did his bit here, as he had done elsewhere. He had the confidence of the whole House and was so highly thought of that he was elected to a Royal Commission appointed in the interests of his fellow soldiers and was elected also to several select committees. I greatly deplore the fact that he should have been the only one of the last Parliament who sought re-election and was not returned at the general election. It is pleasing to learn from the Governor's speech that the State has at last turned the financial corner and that after so many years of deficits the Treasurer has been able to present us with a surplus. I am not so greatly interested to know whether to make that surplus £50,000 was filched from this account or pinched from that account; what I am pleased about is that at last we have reached the corner. There can be no doubt the genesis of that surplus was the wise administration of the previous Government. It was the wise administration of the previous Government that allowed the present Government gradually to reduce the deficit and at last to secure a surplus. The new member for East Perth (Mr. Kenneally), congratulating the Government of which he is a supporter, pointed to the wonderful records that have been achieved; the record harvest, the record wool clip, the record this and that. One thing he forgot to mention was the record of the unemployment in this State dating from the coming of the Labour Government. That, to my mind, is the worst record of all. Year after year we now have the spectacle of unemployment in this State, whereas when the Mitchell Government went out of office we could proudly boast there was not in Western Australia one man out of work.

**Mr. Marshall:** Is not the unemployment also attributable to the activities of the previous Government?

**Mr. Richardson:** No, to the neglect of the present Government.

**Mr. J. H. SMITH:** We learnt in the Governor's Speech that the Treasurer had made provision for three railways. This, at all events, gives me something appertaining to my own electorate to talk about. When listening to the member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) the other night I thought he was going to take all my subjects. When he got to the Bunbury butter factory I felt that he was pinching the member for Bunbury's

stuff, and when he talked of the group settlements at Manjimup—Balingup he called it—I thought I should be left with nothing at all to speak about. However, he forgot to mention the little incident of the Manjimup eagle. I still have a few feathers left there. You, Sir, will remember that the eagle swooped down on a group settler's shack, flew through the open window and tried to grab the baby. Fortunately the group settler, the father of the baby, rescued the child and proceeded to capture the eagle. Thank Heaven I have that to talk about when everything else fails. It is pleasing to know that the Government propose to build that much-needed and long-awaited railway from Pemberton to Denmark. That will open up a vast area of country and give the settlers a new and splendid opportunity. The Government also are going to build a railway from Boyup Brook to Cranbrook. The Premier said the other night that the survey was going on. However, I want to know when the railway will be started.

Mr. Withers: You wouldn't have them start before the survey was completed?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The greatest portion of it has been surveyed already. The Government would find work for a lot of unemployed on that line.

The Minister for Railways: Can you give us some rails?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: There is no need to wait for the rails, for you can start on the earthworks and build the bridges. I am pleased to know also that the Government propose to survey almost immediately the railway from Manjimup to Mount Barker. That will open up an immense tract of land, equal to that at Manjimup, of which the Minister for Lands so warmly approves. That railway will pay from its very inception and will accommodate thousands of settlers. And, as I say, with three railways about to be constructed there is no need to have unemployment in Western Australia. Under the migration agreement we have cheap money. It is now public property that we are going to make a great loss on group settlement. Still, I will endeavour to prove to the House and to the party critics that things are not so bad in group settlement as they are made out to be. I will endeavour to prove—the Minister has denied it—that in respect of group settlement things are fairly good. The other evening the member for Moore (Mr. Ferguson) said the foreign element were the people

to clear the land; that Australians would not do it, as the work was too hard. That is a libel on Australians. There are no finer axemen in the world than Australians, and no one can tell me that a foreigner—a Greek, a Jugo-Slav, or whatever he may be—is a better man than the average Australian bushman. In the timber and other industries the Australian will do more work in six hours than a foreigner can do in 12 hours, and the only reason the foreigners are favoured is that they are cheap labour and in many instances do not know the existing conditions. They take jobs for half their value and, so long as they continue to do so, they will be extremely popular. I speak feelingly on this subject because I know that many Australian bushmen are walking about the city looking for employment and the foreigners are doing the work that should be theirs. Where our own men were receiving a certain price for cutting sleepers, foreigners are delivering for less than half the union rate. That is why a great many people favour the foreigners. An area of 250 acres is being cleared at Jardee, and a gentleman from Moora, who I presume the member for the district knows, has let a contract for the work. He is paying Australian axemen £1 per day of eight hours to clear the land.

Mr. Lindsay: It must be a Government job.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: No; it is a contract job, and the men are earning the £1 a day.

Mr. Sleeman: That is different from the men who got £1 for 2½ months' work.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Something is wrong when that can occur. Those who employ the foreigners at cut rates are undermining the Australian workmen. I do not wish to attack the new member for Moore (Mr. Ferguson), but I must refer to some of his remarks. He said he thought the senior member for the district would take precedence over him in addressing the House. That member did not have an opportunity to speak. The member for Moore put the sting in the tail of his remarks by saying he had just learnt that the interjection made by the member concerned on the night previously was the only speech he had made or was likely to make. After that, the member for Moore proceeded to mete out adulation to the Government right and left.

Mr. Lindsay: That was previously.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The member for Moore said the Government had done this and that for the Midland districts.

Mr. Ferguson: It is true, too.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: According to him the present Government were the only ones who had done anything for the people in the Midland districts.

Mr. Ferguson: They have done more than any other Government.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: But why? Because those districts were represented by two live members, the member for Irwin (Mr. Maley) and the ex-member for Moore (Colonel Denton). I know that on many occasions I was jealous, and so were other members, of the success of those two representatives in getting the Premier and other Ministers to visit the Midland districts and give to the people there things that it was impossible for us to get for the people down here.

Mr. Lindsay: That is because you talk too much in the House.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: No, the record of the member for Toodyay far exceeds mine.

Mr. Marshall: It does not matter how much you talk so long as you do not say anything.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: One point is, we are quite good tempered about it. I listened last night with disgust to the member for Beverley (Mr. C. P. Wansbrough) talking about something of which he knew nothing. He said, in effect, that 50 per cent. of the group settlers had left their holdings, and that 48 per cent. were going to leave, and that there was not 2 per cent. of good land in the whole of the group areas. He even conveyed the impression that there was not an acre of land in the South-West that was of any value. The hon. member satisfied me that he was jumping at conclusions. He said that if he had a mind to, he could say, "I told you so." He had not then heard the speech of the Minister for Lands. I do not think the hon. member has ever been to the groups, and I do not think he knows anything about them. He condemned the group settlements right and left, and even said there is not an acre of good land at Bridgetown. When I contradicted him, he said he could throw a cricket ball over all the good land on the Blackwood River. That proves one of two things—either he does not know good land

when he sees it, or he has been so long rearing sheep and growing wheat in Beverley that he knows nothing of agriculture in other districts. On top of that he tackled the Vermin Act in a very bold and aggressive manner. He linked it with the financial question and said that the agriculturists contributed under the Vermin Act £22,000, which practically accounted for the year's surplus. If they had not contributed the £22,000 under the Vermin Act, there would have been a deficit. Then he went on to say that only one section of the community was affected by dogs. The finest tax ever introduced into Western Australia is the vermin tax. When I say that I am in disagreement with many of my constituents, but I know what ravages have been caused by dogs and the national loss that the State has suffered for years. The only way to exterminate the dingo is by a continuous system of trapping, and not by building dog-proof fences. In the pastoral areas and perhaps in the wheat areas, it is possible to poison the dogs because they have to come into the settled areas when the natural food outback is exhausted, but in the thickly timbered country where there is much scrub, it is impossible to poison them. In no circumstances is it possible to get a dingo to take a bait.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: You could not find the dog if it did take a bait.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: That would not matter. The reason they will not take a bait is that there is so much natural food for them. The only way to exterminate them is by trapping. The vermin tax affects my constituents seriously. Under the Act the boards can get £2 from the central board and increase the amount by another £4 or £5, as the dingoes become scarcer.

Mr. Lindsay: You have not read the new regulations.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: No, but I have the assurance of the Minister that the local boards can get subsidies of £2 and pay up to £10 if they so desire.

Mr. Lindsay: You can add 10s., and under special circumstances another £3. That is the effect of the new regulations.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: That is different from what the Minister told me. A serious matter I wish to bring under the notice of the Minister for Railways is the shortage of

rolling stock. The Minister doubtless will tell us he has made great additions to the rolling stock. If he has done so, there is still a great shortage at certain periods of the year, and the shortage seems to occur during the fruit season when the boats are in. As fruit is a perishable commodity that has to be loaded at specific times, special provision should be made to ensure rolling stock to convey it to the ports.

The Minister for Railways: We are building 50 trucks especially for that traffic.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I am glad to hear that.

The Minister for Railways: We are also building 12 brake-vans which will release 12 more, making 62 in all.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I am pleased to have that assurance because last year we lost the opportunity to ship several train loads of fruit owing to the shortage of trucks. Much of that had to go on the local market, whereas it should have been exported.

The Minister for Railways: But you got a good price for it.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Yes, but possibly we would have got a much better price if it had been shipped to London. We were unable to get either cattle or open trucks. The 50 new trucks will be only a drop in the ocean, because the area under orchard is being increased year by year. The member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) told us last night that the fruit industry was declining and to support his remarks he quoted from the Commonwealth Year Book for the years 1915 and 1925. Everyone knows that the fruitgrowers had a trying time during the war and for two or three years afterwards. They could not get their fruit away; it was rotting on the ground. The orchardists had to turn their attention to other means of making a living, and the orchards were neglected. In many instances, stock was turned into the orchards and hundreds of acres of trees were destroyed. The area under orchards is now increasing by leaps and bounds. In my district, and I dare say in other fruitgrowing districts also, new orchards are constantly springing into existence. Fruit growing is going to become one of our biggest industries. It has been proved that the world wants our Western Australian apples. We had a wonderful season last year when close on 800,000 cases of fruit were exported and good prices were realised. Good prices will continue to be realised, because we are find-

ing new markets every year. Germany is again becoming a big consumer of our fruit, and there are other markets that so far have not been exploited. Still, the industry needs a certain amount of assistance, though not in the overseas markets. The Federal Minister for Markets has a scheme and is desirous that Western Australian growers should adopt it and form a pool. The Minister put up a very fine case, I understand. I did not attend his meeting at Bridgetown, but some of my friends did, and no doubt Mr. Paterson has a wonderful grasp of his subject. The growers, however, do not want any interference with their f.o.b. shipments. They want to reserve to themselves the right to sell, if they so desire, to the agents in Western Australia a proportion or even the whole of their fruit as individual growers, but if they desire to take a risk, they wish to be free to export. I do not know what particular market is to be exploited, but once we find we can sell in the different markets of the world, why do we want to sell through a pool? I have had a good deal to do with orchards though so far I am not an exporter, but it appears to me that if we have a board appointed by the growers, it will mean bringing into existence some costly organisation that will entail the appointment of agents overseas. I believe we must have a certain number of middlemen in any industry. If we could live up to our dreams, we would like to bring the consumer and producer together, a most desirable thing to do. When we have markets established in different parts of the world it is not good policy to interfere with them. I trust that the Minister for Agriculture will not bring down another fruit marketing Bill on the lines of the Queensland Act, although I know the member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) is agitating in that direction. During the course of the last election one of my opponents belittled the efforts I had made in the interests of the Greenbushes tin mining industry. I contend I had been a pest to the Minister for Mines, and the Minister for Lands could have told the people there, as could also my opponent, that I had been instrumental in the Government putting up £2,000 on top of the £1,000 that was raised locally in order to test the lode. This money was put up for the purpose of sinking another 50 feet on the Cornwall lode and driving 100 feet. To-day the money has been all expended and the lode has not yet been proved.

Mr. Marshall: Has any boring been done?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: No. Greenbushes has been a great producer of tin for many years. It is the only defined tin field in the State. I want the Minister to ear-mark say, £5,000 out of the £168,000 the Government are getting from the Commonwealth for the purpose of proving the lodes at Greenbushes. Many practical men who have lived there for many years believe there is a great future before the industry, although to-day it is down and out. If the lode could be proved, employment would be provided there for hundreds of men.

Mr. Marshall: Tin propositions are better than gold to-day.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Tin is a stable mineral which does not greatly fluctuate in price, because the world's supplies are becoming less every year. I ask the Minister for Mines favourably to consider this industry at Greenbushes. The other day when I spoke to him he said nothing had been decided about the laying out of the £168,000. He should ear-mark at least £5,000 of that sum for expenditure at Greenbushes.

The Minister for Mines: You are very moderate. If you can put up a good case, and £5,000 is all that you want, it can be obtained out of another vote.

The Minister for Railways: Provided someone else puts up some money too.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: We have exhausted all we have. Some people sold their socks to raise the money that brought in the £2,000. At one time the timber industry was in a very buoyant condition, and it has been a great revenue producer for the railways. We find from the Speech that £1,500,000 worth of timber was exported from Western Australia last year. This industry requires a little more sympathetic consideration. The trouble is we have a Conservator who is practically a supreme being. The Minister does not dare to exercise any control over him. He administers the Forests Act, which is a ridiculous one and ought to be amended. I have asked that it should be amended, and that drastic alterations should be made. There are quantities of timber abutting on existing railways. This is deteriorating and has been deteriorating for many years. The State should have been enjoying the royalty from that timber, but no one can get the use of it. Something will have to be done with it, for the forests are going back year by year.

The Minister for Railways: That does not require an amendment to the Act.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The Conservator will not throw these Crown lands open. He wants to build up a big monopoly for the State. In effect he says we must wait until all the private paddocks are cut out, and we will then throw open the Crown lands and derive a tremendous royalty from them.

The Minister for Railways: Not at all.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: If that is not the case, why are the Government allowing the Conservator to hold up the country? The officials of the Forests Department are gradually learning. At one time they told us that a fire was the worst thing that could occur in a jarrah forest, and they spent £50,000 to £60,000 in building fire breaks. Hundreds of men were employed at Mundaring constructing these breaks and lookouts, and were kept on duty throughout the 24 hours. Immediately the lookouts saw any smoke, a gang of men was rushed away to put out the fire. The same thing applies to Collie and other districts. That system has now been altered, and it is said that creeping or slow fires are required. Men are instructed to go through the forests at suitable times in the year and put a fire through, because that is found to be the only way to germinate the jarrah seed.

The Minister for Railways: That is quite a different thing from allowing the forests to be destroyed.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I am not a destroyer of State forests.

The Minister for Railways: That is why the system of fire protection was brought in.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Timber is one of our greatest assets. There is also a system of ringbarking. I was tackled on the question by the Premier last year. I made an elaborate statement and said that 10,000 acres of forests were being ringbarked. I spoke too soon. As a matter of fact only 3,000 acres of forests were ringbarked. I have brought the matter up since then. I did some good because the State has derived considerable revenue from those areas, for the cutters were able to get into them and are still cutting the timber. In the past Australian bushmen had an excellent chance of making a living in the industry. To-day on account of the intrusion of the foreign element, the Jugo Slavs, Italians and Greeks, Australians are being squeezed out. These foreigners are even carting the sleepers they

cut to the siding. Millars practically got the whole of the last foreign tender. They have stocks on hand, while other people have to cut in expectation of securing a contract or part of a contract. The result is that the other firms are apt to be squeezed out, and in some cases have lost many thousands of pounds. The price of sleepers came down from between £5 15s. and £7 to about £3 15s. Some people bought paddocks at a royalty of 15s. per load and had to cart 10 or 15 miles. Practically the only people who are working in the industry, except a few Australians who are within the circle, are the foreign people. These foreigners have their own trucks. They are landing their sleepers at the siding at between £3 12s. 6d. and £3 15s. They must be cutting sleepers at about half the union rates. While that sort of thing is allowed, we shall never build up the industry.

Mr. Marshall: Who is the employer?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: These foreigners are taking their sleepers into the siding, and selling them wherever they can.

Mr. Marshall: The individual himself is doing this.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: As a sub-contractor.

Mr. Marshall: From whom do they get the right to cut?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Any individual may make a contract with Millars after arranging with the foreigners to supply him with sleepers at a certain price. He adds what he thinks is necessary to that price and sells to Millars.

Mr. Marshall: From whose land are the sleepers cut?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: From private property. A man may say to the foreigners he will give them £3 15s. for their sleepers at the siding, and he may be selling them for £4 15s.

Mr. Clydesdale: How would you remedy that?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: It cannot be remedied without amending the Act. These foreigners do not pay income tax of any description.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They were working for the Government.

The Minister for Railways: Not now. It is some five or six weeks since they were stopped.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: They were working for the State Sawmills.

The Minister for Railways: Not now.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: They have been stopped since I referred to the matter dur-

ing the election. Something will have to be done for the industry, which is in a bad way. A great deal was said during the elections about the actions of the Government in sending men into the electorates in time to be enrolled for the general election in the South-West, and in other parts of the State.

The Minister for Railways: We sent out 500 men during the last fortnight. What about that?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I am not squealing about men going to my district, but it seemed peculiar that they should have been sent there in January, in time for the election, and that they should have to leave in April on account of the wet weather. The policy was laid down that they should go in November and work until April. I wish to refer to roll-stuffing. I do not know that we can blame the Government for that, but it occurred in my district. A number of men went into my electorate after the 7th January. I can prove that up to the hilt. The endorsed Labour candidate went down to my electorate on the Thursday. The roll was closed on the Sunday. He placed a number of these men's names on the roll. He filled in their claim cards. He and other officials of the Union signed the cards on the Thursday, collected them on the Friday, and delivered them to Bridgetown, 80 miles away, on the Saturday morning. I heard all about this, and I went along on the Monday morning to see the cards, as a candidate has a right to do with a view to lodging objections. To my surprise I found that under instructions from the Chief Electoral Officer, the Bridgetown electoral officer had forwarded the cards to Perth. They arrived in Perth, and I had to make a special application to get them sent back. This meant that 10 days elapsed before the cards were back in Bridgetown. When they had returned, I picked out 14 and lodged objections to them, in each case paying a deposit of 2s. 6d. The cases were set down to be heard under the Electoral Act. The men concerned lived at Northcliffe and elsewhere, and the ordinary notices were sent to them. Those notices arrived too late for the sitting of the court to be held during the third week in February. Accordingly the cases could not be set down for hearing until the following month. By that time the election writ had been issued and objection could not be taken. The cases were thrown out, and my money was refunded. There, I say, was a pure instance of roll-stuffing, whether it was the fault of

the Government or the fault of the selected candidate.

Mr. Marshall: I am not questioning the accuracy of your statement, but can you tell me how the 14 individuals you picked out would have voted?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I have no idea.

Mr. Marshall: It always seems to be assumed that they would have voted Labour.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Now as to roads and bridges. The member for Bunbury (Mr. Withers) recently spoke about the good roads in the South-West.

Mr. Withers: I was speaking of your electorate, not of mine.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: There are no good roads in my electorate except on the groups. However, I consider that this State has adopted the right policy regarding road construction. From years of experience in local government I can certify that with the limited finances of the road boards and the increased traffic on the roads it would be impossible to make and repair roads without some method of construction by a body such as the Main Roads Board. Many people are wroth with the Government on account of the discontinuance of the road subsidy, but they do not seem to realise that to-day the Government are providing in that respect a certain amount from general revenue, which amount in the ordinary course would have been given as subsidy towards road construction.

Mr. Lindsay: Does the amount come from revenue?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: It must come from revenue.

The Minister for Railways: Some of it comes from revenue.

Mr. Lindsay: It comes from Loan.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The Federal road grant has been and will be of wonderful assistance. For 10 years the road boards are to have £2,000 annually to spend on roads, and eventually we shall have a splendid road system throughout Western Australia. By reason of the increased traffic obtaining, that is the only feasible policy. It appears to me, however, that under the main roads scheme the job is not done in quite the right way. One section of a road is made, and another section left undone. Apparently, the money allocated for a certain road is exhausted by the construction of, say, a couple of miles, and then the whole of the plant is shifted elsewhere, half a mile or a mile of the road

being left absolutely impassable. One cannot drive through that section or ride through it. In three or four years' time, no doubt, the board will return to that road and finish it. Generally speaking, however, we are on the right lines as to roads and bridges. Now I wish to deal with group settlement. I listened with great interest to the statement of the Minister for Lands. Some members of the Chamber, I think, were greatly disappointed, because the Minister was so fair. I was led to believe that he would condemn the whole scheme from one end to the other.

The Minister for Railways: Who told you that?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I was led to believe that his statement would startle the country. Instead we found the Minister dealing with the position fairly, and to a great extent on its merits as he sees it through his glasses—possibly not as I see it. I also believe that the Minister is, if anything, too fair in regard to his officers. We must not forget for a moment that the present Government have been controlling group settlement for nearly 3½ years. The previous Government spent just over a million on group settlement, and we must not forget that the present Government have run the total to about five millions. Neither must we forget that the officers controlled by the present Government are the officers who administered the scheme under the previous Government, and are the officers who made all these blunders, or supposed blunders. The same officers are in control of the scheme to-day, and are advising the Minister as to the blocks to be declared useless. I shall not touch on the Peel Estate groups, or on the Busselton and Denmark groups. I shall leave the members representing those districts to do so for themselves. I shall, however, touch on groups in my own district. I am unable to understand the figures which have been quoted as to pasture costing £60 per acre to put down.

Mr. Lindsay: That includes clearing.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I know that, but I do not think the clearing would cost more than £3 or £4 per acre in some places, rising to U20 or £30 in other places. Clearing may have cost more than £30 per acre at No. 1 group.

Mr. Lindsay: There it cost fifty odd pounds per acre.

Mr. J. H. SMITH : The Minister says that it has cost £7 per acre to put down pasture. Suppose clearing cost £50 per acre; then with £7 for putting down pasture, there is a total cost of only £57. In other cases, where the clearing cost £20 per acre, the total cost would be £27 per acre. But the Minister gave the total cost as £60 to £70 in some instances, and as £90 in one case.

Mr. Lindsay : Those figures include houses and so forth.

Mr. J. H. SMITH : No. The Minister said the figures applied only to pasture. I fail to see how they are arrived at. My belief is that group settlement has a future. I had the opportunity of going through the groups with the Minister. While on the job I wish to have a protest recorded in "Hansard." It is a protest against the utterances of the member for Beverley (Mr. C. P. Wansbrough) last night, utterances in which he belittled the men in the group areas, saying that the wrong class of migrant had been sent there. Evidently the hon. member did not know what he was talking about. The group settlers in my district comprise many sterling Australians, and many of the finest Englishmen and Scotchmen I have ever met in my life—as good workers as ever went on a farm, practical men in every respect. Yet we had the member for Beverley declaring that the wrong class of people had been sent to the groups. The hon. member is, I believe, the secretary of his party. I do not know whether he has authority to speak for the party; I hope not. My opponent at the last election, a Country Party candidate, was a great advocate of group settlement. He did not tell the group settlers that they were the wrong class of people. I repeat, I hope the member for Beverley was not speaking for his party. It is dreadful that any member of this Chamber should speak of the settlers in such terms. We are Australians, and so we are the progeny of Britons, and of the same blood as the people on the groups, whom the hon. member belittled. A member of this Chamber is not showing much respect when he speaks of the group settlers as the wrong class of people. I challenge the member for Beverley to go among the group settlers and make that remark to them. I wish to register my protest against the hon. member's utter-

ance. It is pleasing to me to learn that the Minister for Lands proposes to take the group settlement scheme out of the control of one man. He tells us, in effect, that the present Government have been responsible for group settlement during more than three years and have spent over four millions sterling under an Advisory Board comprising Mr. McLarty and his officers. The Minister proposes to do away with that Advisory Board and to substitute for it a new board which will get more closely in touch with the group settlers and see more for itself. But the Minister has not told us why the Advisory Board who have been administering the scheme under his predecessor are now declaring that the land is no good, after all that amount of money has been spent on it. The Minister must have received from those officers a report stating that after 3½ years they have arrived at the conclusion that there is no warrant for going on with the scheme further. That report must have suggested to the Minister that he should abandon the present holdings and settle the men on other blocks. There is something radically wrong in the present position. Another thing that strikes me as very funny is that the settlers knew in March last, before the election, that they were going to be transferred from Northcliffe to other blocks. I did not know anything about that until I went on the groups with the Minister after the elections were over. The settlers knew before. How they got the information I do not know. I do not agree that that country is bad. I believe that some day Northcliffe will be one of the finest areas in the whole of the South-West. In my opinion the black sand plain country will prove all right for pasture, root crops, maize, and other dairying requisites. I have arrived at this conclusion through having travelled with the Minister over that country. We rode over it. I agree that it is absolute madness to put new settlers on that plain, not by reason of the soil, but on account of the want of a drainage system of any description. While the Minister and I were riding over the settlement, our horses were sometimes up to their knees in water. By reason of the water, the children were prevented from going to school. There must be something radically wrong if conditions like those can continue for three years.



If the State is going to lose money I shall sincerely regret it, but I do not for a moment admit that that country will not prove to be good. I was pleased to hear the Minister qualify his statement by saying that possibly we are a generation or so too soon. He said, "Let us settle the good land in those districts first, and then settle the other land with the help of a good drainage scheme." The Minister and I also went through some magnificent new country, as it was called, east of Northcliffe. If settlement goes on in that district, I would like to see it extended through that good karri and redgum country. I do not want the Minister to have any salvaging operations. If we are to do that, it will merely represent a bad proposition again. If he has definitely decided to transfer the settlers from these groups to different land, I suggest that he leaves the boundary fences where they are so that in the summer months there will be somewhere for the settlers to turn their cattle in, and give their pastures a rest. Only the other day I was speaking to several persons at Northcliffe who are anxious to jump in and select that country if it is thrown open. They were very definite in their determination. I understand there is a possibility of some salvaging being attempted, and that it is proposed to pull up fences and so on. I know that the houses will have to be taken away, but I hope that the fences and so on will be left. Dealing with the methods on the groups during the last two or three years, I know that the Government appointed a Royal Commission to inquire into group settlement matters, and it is evident that the Minister for Lands has based his group settlement policy on the recommendations of the Royal Commission. One of those recommendations was that the sustenance allowance should go by the board because it was not working satisfactorily. In lieu of that system the Commission advocated that clearing should be done by contract. In other words, it should be done by piece work instead of on sustenance. That policy was adopted. Probably owing to the fact that some of the officials did not know what to charge, a number of the settlers made fabulous monthly cheques amounting to £70 or £80. Then there was a circular issued limiting earnings, but the fact remains that instead of being farmers, many of the settlers were really converted into clearing contractors, pure and simple. The Minister

stated that some of the settlers had most of their holdings practically cleared. My idea regarding group settlement clearing is that immediately a settler has a certain area of land cleared, he should sow his pastures. There should be no strict regulations as to the number of cows he should carry. If a settler can carry two or three cows only, let him start with that number and then proceed with a building up process. If that system were adopted, they would be better off. Under the present system, the powers that be insist upon a settler doing so much clearing in specified periods, with the result that the settlers become clearing contractors. Some of them are anxious to get on their own property and develop it properly. They cannot do that, however, because clearing has to be done in some other part of the group area. I blame the Government for the system; the fact remains that during the last three years the settlers have had no chance to do any farming. They have not had the implements to farm with, nor have they had the seed or fertiliser. They were merely told what they had to do.

Mr. Lindsay: That has been so from the inception. The settlers have not been allowed to develop their own initiative.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: They have not been building up their holdings and it is hard to know where all the money has gone. The settlers should have been gradually feeling their way and finding their feet. We find a lot of stock on the groups and the officials have been going round deciding that because a certain settler has so much pasturage he must have a certain number of stock. Then the stock are sent down but the settler is unable to carry the stock except in the flush season.

Mr. Lindsay: Who is responsible for the stock being sent down?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I suppose it is the officer in charge of that work.

Mr. Lindsay: The dairy expert?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I presume it is the dairy expert who is on the board. At any rate the settler has to take the stock sent to him. Under the new system proposed by the Minister, the members of the board, I presume, will be closely in touch with the settlers and they will make their inquiries there before submitting recommendations. I hope it will be a board of practical men.

Mr. Richardson: Who will they be?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I do not know. Personally, I do not care who they will be so

long as they are practical men. I hope they will give the settlers an opportunity to farm instead of being merely clearing contractors. If that is done, the men will become more independent, knowing that they are working for themselves. I hope that the proposal to abandon some blocks and amalgamate others will not have any detrimental effect so far as the Imperial and Commonwealth Governments are concerned. When the Premier went to England, his name was made to a great extent on the speeches he delivered. Of course I know that he has personality and ability that enable him when he meets other statesmen of the Empire to prove his worth. His speeches referred to the wonderful possibilities of land settlement in Western Australia and particularly with regard to group settlement. He was received with great acclaim in the Old Country. We know that we have sent the ex-Minister for Lands to the Old Country as Agent General and since Mr. Angwin has been there, he has spoken on every occasion about the group settlement scheme and the possibilities for the future. There are many other matters regarding the scheme that I shall be able to deal with at a later date and will not stress them now. When the Minister for Lands was touring the group settlements he was impressed regarding the possibilities of fruit growing. He grasped the idea that it would be a great thing if the settlers were to have three acres planted with export apples.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: And if they had a few beehives too.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: If the settlers, especially about Hester, and other similar apple-growing country, were to plant that area, the trees would bring in a considerable amount to them.

The Minister for Lands: It is important to do both.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I know that we must have the dairying industry there.

The Minister for Lands: If they can go in for both, I shall be pleased.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: We know the settlers must go in for mixed farming if they are to be successful. As to the question of cows, when we were visiting Group 10 we met a settler who was milking six cows and he was farming very well indeed. He had a beautiful holding divided into paddocks and a shed full of fine clover hay. If the critics of the group settlement scheme could see

what large numbers of the group settlers were doing, they would have no further fears regarding the future.

The Minister for Lands: There was that man named Green from the goldfields as well.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Yes, and dozens of them who will make good. It is said by some that dairying will not pay. Of course we have some pets of cows in the group areas! There were some bought by Mr. Hampshire, our dairy expert. Some were bought in New South Wales and some in other parts of Western Australia. Then there were those bought by Mr. Hall, who is going to classify the group settlements. He bought a lot at £15 and £16 for which no one would give 15s. There is no doubt when we come to find out how much has been expended on group settlement and the amount that has been wasted, we realise what a load the scheme has to carry. But I was talking about the man with the six cows. Those cows are bringing him in £14 per month. He did not buy them from the Group Settlement Board, but picked them for himself.

The Minister for Lands: One swallow does not make a summer.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: But go to other places where they have cows and you will find that they have not the pasture. The Minister says they are now laying down the rule that each holding must have 15 cows. But you cannot milk 15 cows continuously all the year round; you must have them coming in and going out.

Mr. Lindsay: You would require 22 cows to milk 15 all the year round.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: And of 15 cows approximately only ten could be milked all the year round. People say a living cannot be made from ten cows; and they say also that 78 acres of land is too small for any man in that district who has to make a living. Actually, many of the successful men down there have made a livelihood off 30 or 40 acres.

Mr. Thomson: Dairying only?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: No, general mixed farming.

The Minister for Lands: But some of the older settlers had the whole of the country away to Albany to run their cattle on.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Perhaps so, but 75 per cent. of them had only about 400 acres with 70 or 80 acres cleared.

Mr. Lindsay: And another few thousand acres to carry the dry stock.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I say that from 80 to 100 acres will be ample in that district, especially in the good heavy soil country.

The Minister for Lands: But you must give the settler a chance.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Of course. At Bridgetown to-day numbers of people are on very small holdings and are able to run their motor cars without owing any man anything. Those people for the most part have ten or 12 cows each.

Mr. Thomson: You cannot get a motor car and run it out of ten or 12 cows.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: A man named Molten gave me an assurance that for the last three years he has lived and put into the bank on fixed deposit £500 per annum. He has five acres of orchard, ten or 12 cows and 60 acres of other land,

Mr. Lindsay: This is all very different from your opposition to the £18 per annum for cows when you were dealing with Circular 88.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: But these are good cows. The hon. member is endeavouring to misinterpret me. When, last year, in dealing with Circular 88, I was putting up that case I was objecting to the settler being debited for cows that were not bringing him in anything. Some of the settlers milking three or four cows had to buy their own butter, simply because there was no feed. If you have not the grass, no matter how well-bred the animal, it cannot arrive at the full producing stage. I was pleased with the Minister's fairness to-night when he was dealing with group settlement; fairness, that is to say, as he sees the scheme. I believe he had his eyes opened down on the group settlements. Previous to his taking over the portfolio for Lands I suspect that he was biased against the South-West. However, it seems that he has now fallen into line with those who "came to scoff and remained to pray." I hope not too much fire will be heaped upon his head over those 500 abandoned blocks. At Northcliffe unless a great deal of expenditure was to be incurred, what was done was the only thing to do. I do not agree that the land was no good. That land will come into its own some day and prove a wonderful asset to the country; but there must be drainage before we can settle that plain area around Northcliffe. Of course, some of the country with natural drainage will be success-

fully settled. There is a great deal more I should like to say on group settlement but I do not wish to delay the House any further. In the interests of group settlement I will give the Minister every assistance that I can. To those who say that group settlement is going to be a failure I say it has been built up too much. I am sure that if it had been carried on under the administration of the Government that inaugurated the scheme, we should have had far greater results to-day; for we should have had hundreds of men farming on the groups to-day, and that at only half the cost. I believe that instead of those men being converted into clearing contractors, as they have been, had they been given a plough and horses and—

The Minister for Lands: That is hardly fair. The officials administering the groups were appointed by your Government. Moreover, you have always commended Mr. Angwin and it is not fair to go back on him now that he is away.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I said that if under the administration of our Government, I believe those men would have been farmers.

Hon. H. Millington: You have been let down lightly. You ought to be satisfied.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I have not been let down lightly; it does not affect me. I believe it would have been a far better proposition if those men had been made farmers. I do not wish to bring politics into the thing, but I believe it will be made political and that it will be thumped all round the country that it took the Labour Government and the brave Minister for Lands to go down and rectify the blunders made in the past.

The Minister for Lands: I do not want that. I care too much for the future.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I do not think the Minister himself will say it, but there are plenty of others who will.

The Minister for Lands: The one responsible for the scheme to-day is gone to-morrow.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The present Government have been in control of group settlement for 3½ years and they say I am responsible.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I did not hear that.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No, but it is said.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I have heard people say that the blunders were made by the Mitchell Government, and I have heard it said that the same Government were respon-

sible for putting men on the sandplain country at Northliffe.

Mr. Thomson: Who put them there? It was the Government.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: It was not our Government. As I shall have an opportunity to speak on group settlement at a later stage, I shall not delay the House longer on this occasion.

On motion by Mr. Lindsay, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 10.52 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Thursday, 11th August, 1927.*

|   |     |     |     |     |      |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| Leave of absence                        | ... | ... | ... | ... | PAGE |
| Papers: Railway, Fremantle to Esperance | ... | ... | ... | ... | 241  |
| Address-in-reply, seventh day           | ... | ... | ... | ... | 241  |

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

### LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. G. W. Miles, leave of absence granted to Hon. Sir E. H. Witenoom (North) for six consecutive sittings on the ground of urgent private business.

### PAPERS—RAILWAY, FREMANTLE TO ESPERANCE.

On motion by Hon. H. Stewart, ordered—That the report of the Engineer-in-Chief, recommending a main trunk railway line from Fremantle to Esperance in P.W.D. file 1863/23, be laid on the Table of the House.

### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

*Seventh Day.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (East) [4.35]: Once again we have had the pleasure of listening to a Governor's Speech. I congratulate the sponsors of the Speech, but

further than that will not go. Those who frame these Speeches seem to lose sight of the necessity for curtailing the subsequent debates. The documents cover almost every subject that could be imagined, and are responsible for the lengthy debates that follow. Reference is made at the beginning of the Speech to the retiring Agent General, and to his successor. Western Australia is fortunate in having had as Agent General such an able man as Sir Hal Colebatch. It is also favoured in respect of its new Agent General, Mr. W. C. Angwin. In the latter gentleman we have a really good representative, and there is nothing lacking in him from that point of view. Good service was certainly given by Sir Hal Colebatch. It is time, however, that Parliament turned its attention to the duration of the term of Agent General. Sir Hal left Western Australia some three years ago to represent this State in England. Members of Parliament know it takes considerable time for them properly to settle down to their work, and to do justice to their positions as representatives of their constituents. Far more is that the case with the gentleman who is appointed to the position of Agent General. His duties are far wider and more far-reaching and important than those of a member of Parliament. It must take him fully two out of the three years to get properly into harness, and to become widely known.

Hon. J. Cornell: The same thing might be said of members of Parliament.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Members of Parliament have an opportunity of being returned in order that they may carry on their work, but an Agent General has no such opportunity. From the point of view of the State it is bad that an Agent General should serve only for three years, and it is worse for the individual himself that he should be appointed for so short a time. An Agent General proceeding to England has to break up his home and his business connections, if he has any. A man who is fit to occupy that position is generally one who is connected with some important business affairs. In the case of Mr. Angwin I believe that this did not arise because he gave up his whole time to politics. As a rule, an Agent General has to break up everything when he goes Home, at tremendous sacrifice to himself. Although Mr. Angwin belongs to a different political faith, I say in justice to him, and for the sake of the State itself,