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by the Town Planning Commissioner, the Surveyor General and some other officers of the Crown that the land was of no value except for bargaining purposes, meaning that it could be used if the Crown was negotiating for some other land, in which event the area I refer to could be used for bargaining purposes by throwing it in as well. There is some reason for the refusal, and these men would like to know what it is. They are anxious to re-establish themselves in civilian life and to settle down in their own homes. Unless there is some very good reason for this blank refusal, such an attitude should cease. That is all I desire to say on this Vote. My point is parochial in a sense, but it applies not only to Nedlands for I am certain that the same set of circumstances arises elsewhere.

**MR. BRAND** (Greenough) [5.12]: In rising to speak for the first time in this Chamber, I would like to mention the unfortunate circumstances which necessitated the holding of a by-election due to the death of the late member, Flight-Lieutenant Newton, the former member for Greenough. In extending my sympathy to his relatives and friends, I would like to record the fact that he was not only willing to serve his country in the Legislature but finally to pay the supreme sacrifice as a soldier in defence of the Empire. In following in his footsteps I can only, as a returned man myself, do the very best I can to make the sacrifices he was prepared to make himself. As the festive season was mentioned during the speech of the member for Beverley, I fully appreciate the general atmosphere of this House and therefore rather than indulge in a long speech, I shall recognise that brevity will be appreciated at this stage of the session, especially as we are hopeful that Parliament will again meet early next year.

The question of land settlement is most important to each and every one of us and that applies especially throughout the district that I represent. I realise that at this stage the big task ahead is that associated with the rehabilitation of land settlement. The Government is faced with a tremendous responsibility in tackling the problem of ascertaining the total area of land available for settlement by the right type of soldier settler. I hope those two aspects will be co-

ordinated and that we shall not have to re-live through mistakes such as those that followed so closely upon the land settlement scheme after the 1914-18 war. In my district—I do not wish to be parochial, but I think it well to speak of matters of which I have some knowledge—the problem of subdivision of land is a vexed one. There are several large holdings that if subdivided would provide a number of excellent farms. Irrespective of party or policy considerations, at this juncture I feel that a farm of 50,000 acres of first class country should provide a living for between 30 and 40 returned soldier settlers. In that case the question of the interest of one or two men should not be allowed to carry undue weight when provision is made for settling returned men on an area such as 50,000 acres.

On the other hand, we must bear in mind that it would be useless to subdivide large farms that are being operated successfully in producing the food products that are so necessary to feed the starving millions throughout the world. It would be far better to settle men on first-class land that is at present available. I hope the Minister, and the Government generally, will consider that question. It is well known that in the areas around Yuna, Mullewa and east of Morawa, there are many vacated farms which were left by settlers during the dry period. The land there is first-class, but I feel that although the season just closed has been a good one, returning soldier farmers should not be encouraged to adopt the view that following seasons will be similar to it and take up land as far east as Southern Cross, in which event we might have a repetition of the trials and tribulations of which we have heard so much in the past. I stress that point because I know that in the northern sections of Western Australia there are large stretches of light land, which are to be found not only in the drier areas, but from Dongara to Three Springs, where there are many thousands of acres of second-class land heavily covered by shrubs and wattle thicket, which could be made available after the first-class land had been taken up.

That land could be made use of for barley. When speaking to me recently, a member of the Barley Board suggested that the area would be excellent for the produc-

tion of that commodity and he expressed the opinion that if development took place along those lines, instead of importing barley for the production of ale and so forth, Western Australia could well provide for all her requirements in that respect and have a surplus for export, if the areas I mentioned were cleared and put under crop. I suggest that one or two 2,000 acre holdings of this light land where the rainfall is assured and where there is a subterranean water supply be used for experimental purposes, not as a State farm or a research station, but merely to ascertain what can be done with that land. Similar experiments might be tried not only at Dongara but also in other areas because the climatic and rainfall conditions of the State vary so greatly.

In connection with the productivity of our soil, there arises the serious problem caused by noxious weeds. On the Table we have the report of the Royal Commission on Vermin in which mention is made of several new noxious weeds on the Nangetty Station at Mingenew. I refer to the rapistrum weed which we have reason to fear as being one of our worst menaces. Four years ago, this weed covered an area of only a quarter of an acre, whereas it now covers 1,200 acres. I say that the spread of this weed has resulted from the apathetic attitude, not of the Government, but of the people themselves. If we are going to resist the spread of such noxious weeds, we must arouse the people from their apathy to the problem in general and also to the danger of this particular problem. It is too late to ask for Government assistance and, all said and done, it is difficult to cope with the problem without local organisation.

The same remark applies to vermin, about which much has been said during this session, but I point out that rabbits are increasing in number. Once again I stress the importance of introducing legislation early next session to co-ordinate the organisations of the Government and the local authorities and make this a national question. In conclusion, I hope that not only shall we settle soldiers in the South-West, but also that every avenue of productivity, both north and south, will be explored with a view to building up a well-balanced rural State on which we can raise a happy and contented people. I stress again the

need for putting soldier settlers in areas that get rain in the winter, because they must have a sense of security. I ask the Minister to consider the north as well as the south when framing his Estimates in future.

Vote put and passed.

*Votes—Farmers' Debts Adjustment, £1,350; Rural and Industries Bank, £5—*  
agreed to.

*Vote—Labour, £1,585:*

**THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR** (Hon. A. H. Panton—Leederville) [5.20]: I shall not spend much time on these Estimates because they deal largely with routine matters, but the member for Pingelly asked for information about the holiday arrangements for the Christmas season. I do not know exactly what the hon. member's complaint is, but every year we have to decide which days shall be observed as holidays.

The holidays come under three headings: (1) the bank holidays under the Bank Act; (2) the Public Service holidays under the Public Service Act; and (3) the holidays gazetted by the Government for shops, etc. This year Christmas Day falls on Tuesday—it is the first time this has happened since 1934—and this particular day of the week always makes it more difficult to arrange the other holidays. The Government gave close consideration to the matter because so many implications were involved.

The banks, almost without exception, desired the holidays under the Bank Act, which meant Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday in Christmas week and Monday and Tuesday as the New Year holidays. I do not suppose it makes much difference to the banks what holidays they have because there are no perishable goods associated with banking. People who want to lodge money in a bank can make arrangements to do so, and those who want to withdraw money do so beforehand and there is nothing perishable about that unless they take it to the races.

Before the war, public servants were invariably granted three holidays in Christmas week and two in the following week. During the war, the number was reduced to two in Christmas week and two for the New Year. Deputations waited on me and strenuously urged that we revert to the pre-war practice and grant three holidays