

does. We ought, however, to be able to do better than we do. I now wish to refer to the retirement of Mr. Walter, Police Magistrate. This is reminiscent of one of the first actions taken by the Labour Government some years ago when Mr. Roe was removed from his position as police magistrate. The Premier says that the action of the Government in removing Mr. Walter was not due to any vindictiveness concerning what Mr. Walter did on the goldfields during the war. Of course I accept the Premier's explanation, but all I can say is that Mr. Collier is the unfortunate victim of coincidence in that the retirement of Mr. Walter should have coincided with the advent of the Labour Government to power. Mr. Walter had been away on long service leave and came back to Western Australia prepared to resume his duties. He had gained no inkling from any source that he was to be superseded, and the first intimation he received on his arrival was a communication in which his resignation was demanded. He did not resign his position and he was then compulsorily retired. I have no hesitation in saying that Mr. Walter was one of the best magistrates that Perth has had during its history, and I regret that he was retired. I do not think it redounds to the credit of the Government. I am sorry they did it, and I think this action has left a bad impression on the minds of the people. When I entered this Chamber I did so with the idea of not being what is known as a party politician. I came here with the intention of carrying out, as far as I could, one of the traditions of this House and one of its functions, namely, to judge every Bill on its merits according to our views, and to allow only that particular Bill to influence our arguments and convictions when we had it before us. This Chamber is not concerned with the fate of Governments. We are not here to put out Administrations, or to do anything in that direction. We are here to judge measures as they are presented to us and to express our opinion regarding the general policy of Governments. I intend to deal with Bills according to my knowledge and to deal with them on their merits. I have much pleasure in supporting the motion before the Chair.

On motion by Hon. H. J. Yelland, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.18 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 12th August, 1921.

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

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the Supply Bill (No. 1), £1,863,500.

QUESTIONS (2)—ROAD MAKING, FEDERAL GRANT.

Expenditure in Great Southern.

Mr. GRIFFITHS (for Mr. Thomson) asked the Minister for Works: 1, Is it correct that the Government propose to expend the whole of the funds allocated to the Great Southern district, under the road grant, by day labour under departmental supervision? 2, If so, will the Government reconsider their decision, and hand over to the local road boards the expenditure of the money and the carrying out of the work, thus utilising local plant and labour?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Yes. It has been decided to construct by day labour in the following districts in proximity to the Great Southern Railway:—Katanning, Dumbleyung, Kent, Woodanilling, Plantagenet, Tambellup, Kojonup, Preston, Broomehill, Gnowangerup. 2, Local plant and labour will be used wherever possible, but compliance with Commonwealth conditions must be the deciding factor.

Allocations of Money.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Works: 1, What allocations have been made of the first and second years' grants in connection with the Federal grant for road-making? 2, In which road board districts has construction work actually commenced? 3, Are those boards that are capable of carrying out the work proposed in their respective districts to be permitted to do so? 4, In which districts are Public Works Department employees doing the road work?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, A statement showing the allocation of the first year's grant has been laid on the Table of the House. The second year's grant has not yet been allocated. 2, Fremantle, Harvey, Swan, Denmark, Lake Grace, Gingin, Melville, Murray, Sussex, Warren, Albany,

Armada-Kelmscott, Chittering, Augusta, Wagin, Esperance. 3, The work will be carried out by the road boards in all cases where the Engineer-in-Chief so recommends. The certificate of the Engineer-in-Chief must be obtained before the Commonwealth Government will reimburse the expenditure. 4, Denmark, Sussex, Armada-Kelmscott, Lake Grace, Warren, Albany, Murray, Augusta, Fremantle, Wagin.

QUESTION—PEMBERTON TOWN-SITE.

Mr. J. H. SMITH asked the Minister for Works: 1, Is it the intention of the Government to declare a townsite at Pemberton? 2, If so, when do they propose to make the declaration, and have the survey made?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Yes. 2, As soon as the site is definitely fixed.

QUESTION—RAILWAYS, JARNADUP TO PEMBERTON.

Mr. J. H. SMITH asked the Minister for Railways: 1, When will the Railway Department take over the line between Jarnadup and Pemberton? 2, Is it proposed to erect a station and goods shed at Pemberton. 3, Is he aware that a great deal of petty thieving is taking place at Pemberton because there is no officer in charge? 4, Will he appoint an officer immediately?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, It has not yet been definitely settled when the Railway Department will take over this line. 2, 3, 4, These questions will receive consideration in due course. In the meantime traffic is being dealt with by the State Sawmills branch.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Seventh Day.

Debate resumed from the 7th August.

Mr. LATHAM (York) [4.37]: It is usual for the losers to congratulate the winners. I, therefore, take this opportunity of congratulating the Government upon receiving a mandate from the people to carry on the good administration of the State. It was noticeable at the opening of Parliament that the Government have plenty of friends. The accommodation of the House was so taxed that it was almost impossible for visitors to get near the provisions that were supplied for their consumption. I suggest that the House Committee should, on a future occasion, if the crowds are likely to increase as they have done during the last two or three years, make some other arrangement for the better comfort and accommodation of visitors.

The Premier: Give them more room, you mean?

Mr. LATHAM: If the weather were fine a marquee might be erected on the lawn at the side of the House, and afternoon tea served there. Those who come back to the House after the general elections naturally feel the loss of those with whom they have been associated during the previous years. I have been here for only three years, but I notice the absence of many familiar faces from amongst those around me. I particularly regret the loss of the ex-Minister for Agriculture, Mr. Malcy. The people, however, have decided in this way, and we must accept the position. We are to-day relegated to the Opposition side of the House. The Opposition have a wonderful amount of work to do. It is our duty to assist in the good government of the State, no matter on which side of the House we may be. It is the intention of the party I have the honour to lead to assist the Government in any direction that will be beneficial to the State. I say unreservedly that whilst the actions of the Government are likely to be of assistance to this State, we will assist them in every manner possible. I do not say we are going to support any legislation that tends to assist one section of the community against another.

The Premier: That is clear but not very definite.

Mr. LATHAM: It is definite. The little party to which I belong represents the country interests. We say definitely that no party or person has a right to get up in this House and say they exclusively represent a certain section of the community. We represent the country interests, and intend zealously to guard the interests of the primary producers while we are here. We are a small party speaking with one voice on this subject. While we hold our positions in this House, we intend to watch the interests of the primary producers and those dependent upon them as carefully as we can. No political section, whether belonging to one party or another, has a right to say it is the only section voicing the opinion of the primary producers.

Mr. Sampson: We represent the majority of the Country Party.

Mr. LATHAM: That may be so. At election time we heard all sorts of rash statements. Sometimes when we listen to a candidate we wonder if he is really sincere when he tries to persuade the people that he and the party to which he belongs will represent only one section of the community. No one has any right to come into this Chamber ostensibly for the purpose of looking after anything else but the entire interests of the State. To-day more than ever we want people with a big vision, able to see over the little difficulties that immediately surround them. A perusal of the Lieutenant-Governor's Speech convinced me that it is a commendation of the work of the late Government. One would think

from reading the Speech that everything in the political garden is going along beautifully. No great reforms are forecasted. A few amendments to certain Acts of Parliament are proposed, but on the whole the Government of the day are following the policy of the late Government. So long as they continue to do that, there will be very few regrets over the change. How this policy is carried out is quite a different matter. The late Government did very good work. No doubt mistakes were made, but they will be made by the present Government. Much new legislation and new methods were introduced and in such circumstances it was only to be expected that there would be mistakes when an endeavour was made to carry out such big works as those Sir James Mitchell undertook when he was in charge of the Treasury bench. Immigration is a big problem and I am sure that the Minister in charge of that branch of the Government's activities to-day will realise that difficulties lie ahead of him. The population of Western Australia must be built up unless the empty spaces are to remain a menace to us. While it is necessary to bring people into the State it is equally necessary that they should be settled in the country areas. The population of the cities is being built up to-day in a way that is a menace to the State.

Mr. Panton: We have been telling you that for the last five years.

Mr. LATHAM: But little help has been given to overcome the difficulty and no better scheme than that propounded by the Mitchell Government has been brought forward. We have a wonderful heritage in the South-West portion of the State and it is the duty of the Government, even if viewed from the defence standpoint alone, to see that such land is not allowed to lie idle to the envy of people who may want to force themselves on us in the future. We must do something with that part of the State. Is it not better to sacrifice a little in order to achieve that end? Is it not better to do that than to sacrifice people as was done in other parts of Australia during the pioneering stages? We shall not receive a return immediately as the result of the settlement of the South-West, but that is not to be expected. They did not get early returns from the Gippsland areas when they were first settled. So long as we can see a future ahead of land settlement there, together with ultimate returns, the steps that have been taken are in the right direction. I believe it is the intention of the Government to carry out the policy of the Mitchell Government, almost to the letter. I had expected to read of many reforms that one might anticipate, but they were not indicated in the Governor's Speech.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: I do not think you will be disillusioned before the end of the session.

Mr. LATHAM: There is no doubt we shall have some socialistic legislation placed before us.

Mr. Panton: Hear, hear!

Mr. LATHAM: And we shall oppose it as strongly as possible—

The Premier: That shows the open mind you bring to bear.

Mr. LATHAM: We shall oppose it strongly if we consider it is not beneficial to the State as a whole.

Mr. Holman: Do you intend to oppose State farming?

Mr. LATHAM: Socialistic legislation is class legislation.

The Premier: But you have not heard what it is yet.

Mr. LATHAM: No, but the Honorary Minister informed me that I should not be disillusioned.

The Minister for Railways: You have prophetic vision.

The Premier: This is your impartial mind.

Mr. LATHAM: The legislation to be introduced may be for the benefit of a few.

The Minister for Railways: No, for the people as a whole.

Mr. LATHAM: Not if it is like the 44 hour week, which benefits but one section. I would like to have the benefit of the 44-hour week, but I am not likely to get it. I am sorry that the member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson) threw out a challenge the other night when he said that nothing had been done for agriculture in Western Australia by the Leader of the Opposition. One has only to travel to the agricultural areas to see what progress has been made under past Administrations. I can only hope that at the end of the next five years we shall see the same progress made.

The Minister for Railways: You will see more.

Mr. LATHAM: The Minister is optimistic.

The Premier: Why be pessimistic?

Mr. LATHAM: I admit that if the Government, during the next five years, carry the work along the lines adopted during the past five years, good will result for the State.

Mr. Wilson: If it is like the last five years, God help the country.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: The country will be bankrupt.

Mr. Richardson: We have heard that tale before.

Mr. LATHAM: The State is by no means bankrupt to-day.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: It would have been bankrupt if you had remained in charge for another five years.

Mr. LATHAM: It all depends on how the money is spent. It is certain that with the experience gained in the past, we should not have the same difficulties cropping up again, and such difficulties as do appear will be easier to overcome. I trust that when

the Government go to the country again, the State will be as flourishing in the agricultural areas particularly as it was when they came into power.

The Minister for Railways: You have no doubt about that, have you?

Mr. LATHAM: No, but when the member for Guildford throws out such a challenge it calls for a reply. Work has been done and done well and I appreciate the efforts of Sir James Mitchell, in his attempt to develop the South-West. Failure or success depends on the men settled on the land; the scheme itself is all right. I remember reading a speech by the Premier during the election campaign, in the course of which he said that there were 76,000 acres of land under cultivation less than when Labour went out of office in 1916. If that were so, the fact remains that the land under cultivation produced 1,500,000 bushels more.

The Premier: You should study the figures.

Mr. LATHAM: I got my particulars from the returns.

The Premier: The yield depends upon the season and on the area under crop.

Mr. LATHAM: No, not altogether.

The Premier: It does depend on those considerations.

Mr. LATHAM: Better methods of cultivation have been adopted and every year shows an improvement. In the year when we produced 18,000,000 bushels of wheat the season was a good one, and there was a large area under cultivation. Since then, however, conditions have so changed and agricultural education has developed so that we are able to secure better returns from smaller areas of land than were secured previously.

The Premier: The good seasons also tell.

Mr. LATHAM: But I say that improved methods of farming have accounted for the better returns.

The Premier: It would certainly have something to do with it, but you will not deny that we have had good seasons.

Mr. LATHAM: No, but the fact remains that with better methods better returns have been secured from smaller acreages. I remember at one time the occupier could hardly give his farm away, but during the term of the Mitchell Government there has been a restoration of confidence in land settlement. Not only have people been more contented on the land, but the value of the land has increased. That was due to the better tenure of security as well as other considerations I have mentioned. We have had sympathetic Governments that have enabled us to achieve that result. Money has been borrowed to assist land settlement and if we do not assist people to pioneer the outback areas we shall not have any future land settlement. No capital is available in Western Australia for pioneer farming. If the Government desire land settlement to go ahead they will have to find the money to assist those who go outback.

Member: The Government are doing that.

Mr. LATHAM: That is so. It is regrettable that we cannot get people with money to engage in pioneer farming rather than in the purchase of improved properties as is so often the position to-day. The member for Guildford referred to the co-operative movement. I do not think he has always been a friend of that movement. In the early days I believe he opposed giving them the right to handle the wheat.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: No, you are wrong, I introduced them to that work.

Mr. LATHAM: In another place an hon. member said he was responsible for them doing the work.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Then he is wrong.

Mr. LATHAM: I am pleased to hear it, and I hope the co-operative movement will get the benefit of the assistance of the present Government. When the member for Guildford said the other night that there was no connection between the co-operative movement and the Primary Producers' Association, he showed that he knew little about the history of those concerns.

The Minister for Lands: You used to deny there was that connection when you were with their party.

Mr. LATHAM: I do not know that I did.

The Minister for Lands: I do.

Mr. LATHAM: I say it is wrong to assert that there is no connecting link between them.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I say there is no more link between them than there is in connection with the trades union movement.

Mr. LATHAM: I say there is that link. The hon. member does not know the early history. The movement had its birth at a meeting of the Farmers and Settlers' Association, as the Primary Producers' Association was then known in the city. There can be no doubt about that.

Ministerial Members: St. George's terrace farmers!

Mr. LATHAM: What about the newspaper that is issued from the building of the co-operative movement?

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: Are you condemning that phase of the work?

Mr. LATHAM: I am not condemning; I am speaking for the co-operative movement. Does the hon. member misunderstand?

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: I do not misunderstand you.

Mr. LATHAM: Then let us get on. Here we have a paper edited, although not printed or published, there, but it is the official organ of the co-operative movement.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Those controlling the paper are merely tenants of the co-operative concern.

Mr. Panton: I notice the paper gave the Leader of the Country Party a good "go" this week.

Mr. LATHAM: I am not worrying about that. There has been that link between the Primary Producers' Association and the Co-operative Company.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Anyhow, that arrangement is likely to be terminated at any moment.

Mr. LATHAM: What a disclosure! I say the "Primary Producer" newspaper is the connecting link between the Primary Producers' Association and the co-operative movement.

Mr. George: You do not call it a newspaper?

The Minister for Lands: It is a good paper.

Mr. LATHAM: It speaks well of the Minister and it provides wonderful propaganda for him. If the member for Guildford took away from the paper the political part, he would help the co-operative movement considerably more.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I would like to see a co-operative paper.

Mr. LATHAM: I do not know what that would be like, but if politics were kept out of the paper, the movement would be assisted.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: But it is not part of that movement.

Mr. LATHAM: The hon. member will not dispute the fact that one gentleman is a director of both concerns. At all events, he is a director. There is an important link between the Primary Producers' Association and the co-operative movement.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: The co-operative movement is trying to get rid of the newspaper.

Mr. LATHAM: If they were to delete that section dealing with politics, they would be doing better work for the country.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: You would have had an easier time during recent months.

Mr. LATHAM: No, for whatever they had to say about me helped me materially.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: The paper ought to cut politics altogether.

Mr. LATHAM: The member for Guildford also said that when land settlement took place no statesmanship was shown in respect of railways and schools. The hon. member knows that in the agricultural districts it is impossible to lay down railways in straight lines, as might be done if all the land were equally good. Also it is impossible to provide schools exactly as one would like, for people are always coming and going.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Do you draw an analogy between railways and schools?

Mr. LATHAM: I am referring to the hon. member's statement the other evening. While we have a variety of soils, we cannot lay out railways in straight lines.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: If you will look up the report of the Royal Commission of 1904-5 you will find that they said it could be done.

Mr. LATHAM: In 1904 a different vision prevailed from that adopted later on. The hon. member was a Minister of a Government that had an opportunity to rectify some of these things. However, that was not done. I know there is difficulty. The departments of Lands, Agriculture, Railways and Education ought to work with some co-ordination in country districts. What is the use of declaring to-day that no statesmanship was shown in those remote days, seeing that we have since had a period during which those palpable defects have not been remedied? I hope that, if possible, the suggested alteration will be made. However, it is not practicable, because land will change hands and people come and go. Not everybody is fitted for the land, although all think they are, particularly when backed by a paternal Government. To revert to the co-operative movement, let me say that on every occasion in this Chamber assistance has been rendered to that movement by members representing country interests. Through their having a political party in the House it has been possible for them, as acquiring agents, to secure £375,000 by the handling of the wheat. I hope they will go on handling it while they retain their ability and their plant.

The Minister for Mines: It was a Labour Government that appointed them.

Mr. LATHAM: I know that during the last Parliament we had a deuce of a fight to have them made acquiring agents.

The Premier: It was our other Government that first made them acquiring agents.

Mr. LATHAM: The present Government when in Opposition changed very much when they opposed the co-operative companies being made the sole acquiring agents for the State. I hope they will still be the acquiring agents, if the Government have anything to do with it. Now let me turn to the speeches made by the Premier on the hustings. On the 13th January, 1924, reference was made to the member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson), pointing out that in the minds of the people the hon. gentleman knew a good deal about land settlement. It continues—

Labour has been responsible for the pooling system, which was initiated by Hon. W. D. Johnson as Labour Minister. The farmers have learnt the advantages of State-wide co-operation.

The Premier: That is a fact.

Mr. LATHAM: Also there is reference to the Labour Party as having established the Industries Assistance Board in 1915, mainly owing to the foresight of Mr. Johnson. I refer to that because I cannot understand why the hon. member was left out of the Cabinet.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: You are looking for stable secrets now.

Mr. LATHAM: Here is a gentleman with the ability to create things highly beneficial to the State, such as wheat pooling and the Industries Assistance Board. Yet with a Ministry in a time of stress, when financial difficulties are at their hardest, when we require people to organise the co-operative movement, that hon. member is left out of the Ministry.

Mr. Wilson: Just as Sir James Mitchell left you out.

Mr. LATHAM: But I have never created any wheat pools.

The Premier: I think your omission was the cause of the split in your party.

Mr. LATHAM: If the member for Guildford has the ability to do all these things, I hope the Premier will take advantage of the first vacancy to put the hon. member into the Cabinet. I am often asked why the hon. member was left out when he had all this knowledge.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Why don't you smile, Charlie?

Mr. LATHAM: I am pointing out that the State needs the services of our best and most brainy men. I know something of the work of the member for Guildford in the country districts. He has paid for some of his experience, and I am sure it would prove beneficial to the Government.

Mr. Richardson: They have a well balanced team now.

Mr. LATHAM: In the Governor's Speech I notice that the Government propose to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into the group settlements. I want to know why. That is something I cannot understand. Every document is available to the Minister in charge of the group settlement, and every avenue is open to him to obtain expert advice. Why, in the name of goodness, should a Royal Commission be appointed?

The Premier: For the past four years we have had 12 Royal Commissions every session.

Mr. LATHAM: And the Premier does not want to get away from the old method of governing. He wants to perpetuate these Royal Commissions. I do not believe that is his intention at all.

Mr. Richardson: The present Leader of the Opposition opposed every one of them.

Mr. LATHAM: I do not believe the Premier wants to perpetuate something that never gives the State any result. I remember one Royal Commission whose report was never read.

The Premier: While your Government were in office you had 50 Royal Commissions in four years.

Mr. LATHAM: I suggest that we cut out these unnecessary commissions and get down to business methods.

The Premier: You are very late in waking up.

Mr. LATHAM: Better late than never. While everything is available to the Min-

ister, no good purpose can be served by appointing a Royal Commission.

Mr. Panton: What are you afraid of?

Mr. LATHAM: Nothing, except the wasting of the people's money.

The Premier: You think sufficient was wasted on 50 Royal Commissions?

Mr. LATHAM: I am not afraid of anything for myself, nor are the members of the last Administration. Seeing that the Minister has all the documents available, and can call on any expert evidence he may require, surely there can be no necessity for this proposed Royal Commission! Again, the Premier has stated that he hopes to be able to ask for £1,250,000 expenditure for the group settlements. It is a tremendously large sum of money.

The Minister for Lands: I wish we could do with less.

Mr. LATHAM: I hope you will be able to.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: He would have been able to do with less if your Government had done their duty and spent the money they ought to have spent.

Mr. LATHAM: The hon. member will have an opportunity to tell the House where the money was mis-spent.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: It was not mis-spent. It was left to us to spend.

Mr. LATHAM: The sum of £1,250,000 is a very large amount to spend in one year.

The Premier: It is. It shows how little you know of what has been going on when you do not know that we are committed to it.

Mr. LATHAM: Will this Royal Commission be able to report to the House before the £1,250,000 is asked for?

The Premier: No. We should have to close down everything to await the report.

Mr. LATHAM: This is the second month in the new financial year. There are ten months still to go, and I hope that if it is necessary to spend this money, and if any benefit can be expected to accrue from the appointment of a Royal Commission, the Commission's report will be available before the money is required. If we are to get any benefit from a Royal Commission, let us get it at once. It ought to be at work to-day.

The Premier: These groups are committing the State ten years ahead. During that period we ought to get some benefit from the work of the Commission.

Mr. LATHAM: I hope the Commission is not going to sit for ten years. But I cannot see the need for the Commission. If there be anything that requires changing, or anything the people ought to know, it ought to be available before the £1,250,000 is spent.

The Minister for Lands: We cannot stop spending the money without throwing the group settlers out.

Mr. LATHAM: I am not asking that you stop it.

The Premier: Of course you are.

Mr. LATHAM: I say it is a very large sum of money, and that if the Commission be appointed its report ought to be available before the money is demanded of the House. Some money, of course, is being spent on the groups daily; but I hope that the Estimates will be down early and that we shall have the report of the Royal Commission before so great an expenditure is authorised. Things cannot be in such a bad condition on the group settlements, because in the "West Australian" of the 27th June the Minister in charge is reported as follows:—

I had visited portions of these areas previously with Sir James Mitchell, not very many months ago. When I saw the large cleared areas—some under pasture and others ploughed and seeded—and remembered that so recently I had seen them with only a few trees pulled, it impressed me with the magnitude and progressive nature of the scheme. While there may be some disagreements regarding the methods adopted, I am satisfied that wonderful work has been done. It is a country somewhat similar to England, of which it reminded me, and Sir James Mitchell will always rightly receive credit for having opened up a New England in the south-western portion of our State.

The Minister admits that good work is being done. If we are to spend one and a-quarter millions this year, it may be two and a-half millions next year.

The Premier: Yes, that is the way it is going on. Last year it was £750,000, this year it is £1,250,000.

Mr. LATHAM: In a year or two, surely, some of the group settlements will be able to release themselves from the Government.

The Premier: We should be getting some results.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: We ought to be able to get something this year, but the people cannot do it, because of the attitude of the late Government.

Mr. LATHAM: No, it would be unreasonable to expect any returns this year.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: What! after three years?

Mr. LATHAM: They have not been going for three years.

Mr. Wilson: Yes, the oldest of them, for three years and four months.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: You have been getting bad information.

Mr. LATHAM: The greatest progress under this scheme took place while the Premier was away or after his return from England. I went to the Peel Estate 18 months ago and saw men who then should have been able to help themselves.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: Not on groups.

Mr. LATHAM: No, men in small settlements.

The Minister for Lands: The first group was started on the 28th March, 1921.

Mr. Sampson: But the bulk of the work has been done in the last 18 months.

Mr. LATHAM: If the members of No. 1 group are in a decent area, they should be able to produce something this year.

The Minister for Lands: That group will not be finished until 1926.

Mr. Panton: You badly want a Royal Commission because you do not know what is going on.

Mr. LATHAM: If I thought a Royal Commission would enlighten the hon. member I would possibly support the proposal, but I do not think he would even read the report when it was drawn up. If 1¼ millions of money has to be spent this year, let us go a bit steadier and not launch out with new groups until we can see some daylight.

Mr. Millington: Why did you not think of that before?

Mr. LATHAM: Why did not the previous Labour Government see all the trouble that lay ahead of the L.A.B.? We are trying to develop the South-West; land that has been lying idle for years and years, waiting for people to come along and do something with it. They have not tackled it. The Government have taken the responsibility and provided they are careful, the State will not lose anything by it in the long run.

The Premier: The trouble is the expenditure is very heavy in the first few years.

Mr. LATHAM: By carrying out the system as at present the conditions are better for the people doing the development work, and are in contrast to the conditions at Gippsland and other places where women without boots on their feet had to go about milking cows. The most important subject that members are called upon to consider is that of finance. The Premier in his speech said:—

It had been said by statesmen in the past that finance was government and government was finance. There was no more important question to be faced than that of finance, for no question affected more the well-being of the people. The financial difficulties of a State meant to the people increase in the burden of taxation, of railway charges and increased imports generally.

The Premier also referred to the subject in another speech later on. I do not know that the financial position was so very bad during the time of the late Government. I do not pretend to be an authority on finance, but if things had been so bad one would naturally have expected to find some method of reform outlined in the Governor's Speech.

The Premier: What, in the Governor's Speech! You are unsophisticated.

Mr. LATHAM: The Premier suggested that it was intended to economise.

The Premier: You could not have it in the Governor's Speech.

Mr. LATHAM: It would be good propaganda to suggest where it was intended to cut down expenditure. Demands that will not improve the financial position have already been made upon the Government.

The Premier: They are not all in the direction you have in mind, either.

Mr. LATHAM: Doubtless there are many of which we know nothing, but if we are going to seriously consider the financial position and attempt to reduce expenditure, the Government are starting badly by granting the 44-hour week. If that be conceded to one section of the community, other sections will come along and make unreasonable demands.

The Premier: Then it is rather unfortunate that the late Government embarked upon it four years ago.

Mr. LATHAM: The late Government restored the working week to 48 hours.

The Premier: Only after three years.

Mr. LATHAM: Evidently there was no necessity for the shorter working week, and the late Government were curtailing expenditure by reverting to the 48-hour week.

The Premier: We have not had three months of it yet.

Mr. LATHAM: It will be difficult to revert to the 48-hour week. There is very little money available for that kind of thing unless loan funds be used, and if the Government do not get value for the money expended where will the interest and sinking fund come from?

The Premier: There was not so much money available when you were piling up the six millions of deficit, but you did it.

Mr. LATHAM: But the war was largely responsible for that, and then soldier settlement and other things caused a drain on the Treasury.

The Minister for Lands: The drain was upon loan funds.

Mr. LATHAM: But interest and sinking fund had to be met.

The Minister for Lands: Not on the six millions.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: The late Government borrowed in order to pay the interest.

Mr. LATHAM: That is a new method of financing.

The Premier: It is very extensively practised.

Mr. LATHAM: But it is not done so openly as the Honorary Minister would have us believe. While there is nothing to indicate that expenditure will be curtailed or that there will be any reform in that direction, yet taxation measures are to be introduced.

The Premier: They may be introduced to reduce taxation.

Mr. LATHAM: I hope they will be. The people are asking what the Government intend to do. Of course I exhort them to have a little patience. I notice that the farming community, through the Primary Producers' Association, have expressed confidence in the present Government.

Mr. Thomson: Because they get consideration from the present Government.

Mr. LATHAM: I have no reason to complain of the consideration extended to

my district, but development would not have proceeded if we had not had a sympathetic Government in the past. There are many things that no Government could do, willing though they might be to do them. Money is necessary.

Mr. Sleeman: I hope you will bear that in mind.

Mr. LATHAM: If the Government are going to give privileges, let us all share them.

Mr. Taylor: They are very small and will not go round.

Mr. LATHAM: Possibly there will be no necessity to increase the privileges.

Mr. Panton: Your party have had a decent cut.

Mr. LATHAM: And have done wonderful work for the State; make no mistake about that! The revenue for the year, after providing expenditure necessary to carry on the utilities, was £2,276,696, and out of that free services cost £1,133,000, leaving very little for the Treasurer to provide interest and sinking fund and a hundred and one other things. When one hears of the demands being made upon the Treasurer, one must feel sympathetic towards him. If he is going to give in to all the requests made from both sides of the House, I can imagine how far he will reduce expenditure.

The Premier: Are there going to be no wants from York before you sit down?

Mr. LATHAM: York has always been fair and reasonable. I expect a fair and reasonable sum to be expended in my district, but I intend to make no unreasonable demands. I hope loan funds will be available to construct some of the railways that have already been authorised. Failing that, I hope the suggestion of the member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson) will be carried out. Good roads must be provided for the people who are growing wheat 20 or 30 miles from a railway. To-day there is wheat lying outside waiting to be carted to the sidings; the roads are so bad.

The Premier: The last three months is the first time you have seen anything like a road construction policy in this State.

Mr. LATHAM: Additional assistance has been rendered by the Commonwealth.

The Premier: Ninety thousand pounds was available last year and the then Government took only £13,000.

Mr. LATHAM: I do not know that the money is yet available.

The Premier: It was available last year.

Mr. LATHAM: But is it available to the road board or to the Minister to spend?

The Premier: Last year there were 340 men on road construction work. To-day there are 1,100.

Mr. LATHAM: Negotiations have been carried on with the Federal Government for a long time and I do not think they have been finalised yet. Had the late Government been prepared to take the money unconditionally, it could have been used; but

I hope the present Government will not take anything unconditionally from the Commonwealth.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: It would have been taken if the late Government had been prepared to find pound for pound, but they were not.

Mr. LATHAM: I will leave the ex-Minister for Works to answer that.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: It is true.

Mr. LATHAM: I know that money is not yet available for some of the roads in my district.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: And probably never will be.

Mr. LATHAM: I have more faith in the Government than to think that. If the Government say that £3,000 will be available for my district, I believe it will be.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: So do I, but there will still be roads in your district that will not be constructed.

Mr. LATHAM: I am glad of that admission. It is pleasing to hear of Ministers going into the country and seeing what it means to have decent roads to the sidings.

The Premier: We have known the country for many years.

Mr. Chesson: We have tramped it.

Mr. LATHAM: There are some members on the Government side that do not know the country too well. Many of them have an idea that the farmer is a man that lives in a beautiful mansion, earns a wonderful income, and can do everything for himself. I am glad to have the Premier's statement, because we often hear interjections about all the money the farmers are making. There are men on the land to-day living nearer the bread line than are the unionists.

Mr. Heron: The unionists are too far below the bread line.

Mr. LATHAM: The Government must be careful lest they hurt the men on the land that to-day are below the bread line.

Mr. Heron: We have them all below the bread line.

Mr. LATHAM: I know of men earning not £2 or £3 a week, but less.

The Premier: My party stood by the farmer during the bad years, and that is the best indication of what they will do in future.

Mr. LATHAM: The Premier knows the Government had to do it. Anybody else would have had to do it.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: And the then Government did it well.

The Premier: It is very ungenerous to say we had to do it.

Mr. LATHAM: Any Government would have had to do it. What would have been the position otherwise?

The Premier: It is a matter of degree as to how far another Government would have done it.

Mr. LATHAM: I believe it was done generously.

Mr. Lutey: Deeds speak louder than words.

Mr. LATHAM: Farmers are not making the tremendous incomes that some members seem to suppose. Every time taxation is imposed on the farmer, the development of the lands of this State is hampered. Next as to a phase of land settlement. I know some members are asking for the establishment of more light land experimental farms. But plenty of settlers here are doing good service by working light lands and making a living off them. Those light land farms illustrate better what such country can do than any experimental farm. A scheme might be put up for showing what light lands can do with railway communication, good roads, and water supply. If the Government would divide the light lands into 5,000-acre blocks and fence them, we would to-day be running millions of sheep on lands which actually are running nothing but rabbits and dingoes. There must be millions of acres of light lands available, and some of that country is pretty close to the city, coming right down the Great Southern Railway. I know the present Minister for Lands is able to devote much more time to his department than the last Minister was able to do, and I hope he will go into this matter and see what can be done. Members representing mining constituencies say the late Government did nothing for the mining industry. In fact, however, they did a great deal.

Mr. Panton: What did they do?

Mr. LATHAM: I heard the hon. member say that £3,000 was locked up in a show in his district.

Mr. Panton: That money was frittered away.

Mr. LATHAM: Again, the price of water was reduced last year on certain conditions.

Mr. Panton: What were the conditions? The Lake View increased their directors' fees by £1,000 a year. That is how some of the money represented by the reduced price of water was dealt with.

Mr. LATHAM: The money was to be devoted to development work. If the development work resulted in increased production, the State as a whole benefited. I regret that the Minister for Agriculture has gone out. I was hoping that before the Annual Estimates were reached we would know what was being done in regard to the establishment of an agricultural college. A committee was appointed to examine into the question of the most suitable site. As happens in the case of many committees and Royal Commissions, the report was not carried into effect.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: How long ago was that committee appointed?

Mr. LATHAM: Three years ago.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: Why didn't you ask your question of the late Government? You put it to the present Government, who have been in office only three months.

Mr. LATHAM: The money for the work was on last year's Estimates. I believe it is still on the Estimates.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: No. It lapses if it is not spent.

The Premier: The agricultural college will be a going concern very shortly.

Mr. LATHAM: I am very glad to hear it, and I hope the Government will give effect to the committee's recommendation. That is the only thing I am asking just now for my district. I wish to say a word of appreciation for the work of the Narrogin school farm. The young folk there are taught splendidly, but the teaching does not go far enough. A two-years' course does not suffice to teach children what they should know in order to be able to apply scientific agriculture. To-day the farmer must be able to do that; the present is not like the old times of the single-furrow plough. Then there is the question of wire netting, which is being dealt with by the Minister for Lands. I hope some system will be initiated by which the netting will be properly applied to the fences. Travelling through the country recently, I noticed that some of the settlers were netting inside the fence, while others were netting outside. Before coming to Western Australia I never saw wire netting put inside the fence. It was always placed on the outside, in order to keep the rabbits out.

The Minister for Lands: Do you want officers sent round to tell the settlers how to put up wire netting?

Mr. LATHAM: There are among the settlers people out from Home who have never previously seen wire netting on a fence. Moreover, there are settlers from the Eastern States who put netting on the inside of the fence.

The Premier: Oh, impossible!

Mr. LATHAM: It is being done

Mr. Lindsay: You will see traps on the inside of the Government fence.

Mr. LATHAM: I should like to see them on both sides of the fence. On the question of hospitals, demands are now being made for more hospitals in various parts of the State. That demand is being addressed to the cheerful givers, who are continually being asked to put their hands in their pockets. Moreover, every existing hospital seems to be hard up. In this connection I sincerely hope our Treasurer will approach the Federal Treasurer and ask him to grant us the entertainment tax for hospital and charitable purposes.

The Premier: He has given it to Tasmania, but not to Western Australia.

Mr. LATHAM: I hope the position of this State will be placed before the Federal Treasurer.

The Premier: He has turned down an application for a few thousand pounds, and so he is not likely to grant us £100,000.

Mr. LATHAM: The entertainment tax returns about £38,000 annually. I do not hesitate to say that I am in favour of State lotteries for charitable purposes.

When the Bill to amend the Criminal Code in this respect was before Parliament, we were inundated with letters and petitions from all sorts of people who did not realise that there was more gambling going on than there would be if we had properly authorised and properly conducted State lotteries. I do not know that it is a function of government to conduct lotteries, but someone could be authorised to run them, and that person would pay for the privilege. Queensland is raising a lot of money for hospitals and charities from lotteries.

Mr. Panton: Queensland has raised a lot of that money from Western Australia.

Mr. LATHAM: Yes; and look at the revenue we send to Tasmania. If we had an authorised lottery here, we could tax it in the same way as Tasmania taxes Tattersalls, and thus obtain a considerable amount of revenue.

The Premier: A lottery would be a very desirable State monopoly.

Mr. LATHAM: There should be no unauthorised lotteries. Many people hawk doubtful tickets for raffies, the results of which one never knows.

The Premier: It would be interesting to know what the unclaimed prizes amount to.

Mr. LATHAM: When one gets down to the gambling at "White City," one sees the very worst form of it. Youngsters gamble there.

The Minister for Railways: No.

Mr. LATHAM: Yes. I saw women and children gathered around three Chinamen who were doing some sort of manipulation. The crowd was so thick around them that I could not get in to see exactly what they were doing. The children were staking pennies.

The Minister for Railways: That has been stopped, anyhow.

Mr. LATHAM: I am pleased to hear it.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: How did you know they were gambling if you could not get in to see?

Mr. LATHAM: I heard them say they had won sixpence or a shilling. I do not object to a little gambling, especially if the profits from it are applied to charitable purposes, so that the cheerful giver will not be called upon to put his hand into his pocket continually. The demands for charities and hospitals have become very heavy in this State. I shall not prolong the debate. I know that the sooner it is finished, the quicker shall we get down to real business. The party I have the honour of leading will do all they possibly can to help the Government conduct the affairs of Western Australia successfully. While we are a small party—

The Premier: How many?

Mr. LATHAM: Seven. Though a small, we are a solid party. We hope to grow strong enough some day to control the destinies of the State. In the meantime we are willing to co-operate with any other section of political thought whose interests are parallel with ours, in the endeavour to

secure a good solid party that will look after the welfare of Western Australia. The Premier knows that an Opposition is a very necessary thing and can do very useful work. The Premier was on this side for six years.

The Premier: Eight years.

Mr. LATHAM: No doubt the hon. gentleman finds the other side of the Chamber much warmer.

The Premier: Oh no! There is such a thing as becoming accustomed to an environment.

Mr. LATHAM: For the present we should try to consolidate the forces opposed to Communism. I do not say for a moment that the Premier is a Communist. I do not suggest that of any member of the Government.

The Premier: But Communists may trek over from Russia at any moment.

Mr. LATHAM: There are some in this State.

Hon. J. Cunningham: Where are they?

Mr. LATHAM: There are some here. No doubt the Honorary Minister has met a few of them.

Hon. J. Cunningham: I always pick my company.

Mr. LATHAM: My party will do everything possible to render that assistance without which Western Australia cannot be expected to advance.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. W. C. Angwin—North-East Fremantle) [5.45]: I was rather amused at the beginning of the speech of the hon. member who has just resumed his seat. I hardly know to what country party he belongs, but I will speak of him as the member for York. He said that the Westralian Farmers were connected with the Primary Producers' Association. I hope that we have not left the infection behind so far as the "Primary Producer" newspaper is concerned. The facts that were published in that newspaper enabled us to show to hon. members opposite—they were then sitting on this side of the House—and to those occupants of the cross benches, that the Westralian Farmers in conjunction with the body known as the Country Party were joined together, almost as one body. The hon. member and his colleagues continually denied that statement. I do not know whether it is necessary for two parties to have a row, so that the truth may be told.

Mr. George: Try it and see how you get on.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member said the two parties were connected, and he produced the well known newspaper to which I have referred to disprove the statement that there was not unity simply because the paper was published in the Westralian Farmers' building.

Mr. Latham: I merely said there was a connecting link between them.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I enjoy reading the "Primary Producer" newspaper because it contains a good deal of information that affects the farming community of the State. The hon. member claims he is here to represent the farmers; therefore I should have thought he would have been the last man to say anything derogatory to the producers' newspaper.

Mr. Latham: I have never said one derogatory word.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Then when the hon. member concluded his remarks I was just as amused because he said he wanted to consolidate the forces. I should have thought that the hon. member would have taken that matter into consideration twelve months ago and not followed a line of action that would have had a tendency to be considered a bar, by what he termed the combined party, to oppose those known as communists. From my experience it is easier to keep together when once you are together, than to try to re-unite after there has been a sundering of the forces. Always a certain amount of feeling exists, whether justly or unjustly I cannot say. The fact remains that it does exist and that sometimes it leaves behind it a certain amount of bitterness that has the effect of—though the forces may have the appearance of being united—keeping them still apart. We have noticed what has happened in the Federal political arena. A pact has been arrived at, but I am very much afraid that as it stands, the question the hon. member has brought forward has been raised for the express purpose of throwing dust in the eyes of the people in regard to the term "Nationalist." Every person in the State, everyone who resides in a country, having any love at all for that country is a nationalist, and therefore it is nothing but political fraud to attach the name to any particular party and declare to the world that they and they alone are nationalists. If I thought for a moment that the party with which I am connected were not nationalists I would not hesitate to leave them immediately. I believe that every member on this side of the House has a love for Australia, and his patriotism is such that in the event of trouble he would take immediate steps to defend it. That being the case, are we not all nationalists? We cannot apply the term to any particular party. Therefore I repeat that the discussion that has taken place in the Federal arena had for its sole purpose the throwing of dust in the eyes of the people because the members representing the Nationalist Party realise that the writing was on the wall. The hon. member need not worry about communists. They may come in at some future time, but I shall

never live to see that day. The term communist was freely used in the report on migration made by the overseas delegation that visited Australia. They declared that the most progressive settlements they had come across in Australia were the settlements in communities, and they recommended that community interest should be established. They particularly referred to that one State of all States of Australia which has been considered backward so far as communities are concerned—the State of Victoria. Does this not show that while we at times declare our opposition to communities, we are in fact amongst them every day of our lives. Where is the State to-day that has done more in the way of community settlement than Western Australia? During the last week or fortnight my hopes have been raised somewhat. I admit that previously I had been down in the dumps for a considerable period. For the time being I am acting as chief of the communities and I am responsible for the disbursement amongst those communities of something like eleven millions of money. It is the community interest that has brought about this position, a position created for the purpose of enabling a body of people to band together and assist one another without dividing up into sections. Let us go back a few years. Sometimes I think that I have lived a considerable time in this world; at other times I feel I am still young. There are only a few members in this Chamber who have reached the stage of life of between 60 and 70 years, and we have only one who is between 70 and 80. As I look back I will refer briefly to what has taken place with regard to shipping. In the early days there were no large companies in existence. The captain of a vessel had an interest in his ship, and did a bit of business when he reached a port. Later on small companies were formed and the captain lost the interest he had. To-day there are big combinations and the captain is merely an officer. People realise that the combination of one class was beneficial to that class. The time is now arriving when the combination of the people as a whole will prove of advantage to the people as a whole, and there is not the least doubt that events are trending that way. I remember on one occasion going from Australia to my home in Cornwall. I pointed out that large companies were trading throughout England and elsewhere, but a cousin of mine who is a storekeeper replied, "We are all right; that can only apply to large cities; we can never be interfered with." I drew attention to the fact that the combines were stretching out their tentacles in every direction and that the time was not far distant when those tentacles would make their appearance in the smaller towns as

well as the larger ones. Then some years later I visited Cornwall again and I found that companies were trading there, just as we have them here in Perth and everywhere else. They sell every line that is necessary for the maintenance of the individual and the people now realise that if everyone hands together it is not for the purpose of injuring the many. The example has been followed in every direction and people have been amalgamating for their own protection and for the protection of those whom they love. I believe that the socialistic tendency prevailing throughout the world to-day is bound to control the world at last. The people will rule and will take control. Consequently as far as the member for York is concerned, he has no more power to stop the advancement in this direction which is spreading throughout the world, than he has to stem the ebb and flow of the tide. I would not have digressed but for the hon. member's remarks on the subject of communists. Then the hon. member referred to the 44 hour week. The matter was dealt with on the Supply Bill and others have taken the opportunity to discuss it since. My colleague, the Premier, replied to the arguments that were used when speaking on the Supply Bill and after his reply, I never saw a subject fall so flat as did that. Even the ex-Premier himself did not bother about stopping to take a division, but walked outside and said "Do what you like." The member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. George) spoke for about five minutes on the subject.

The Premier: A most unusual thing for him.

Mr. George: I said a lot in that five minutes.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Other members did not say anything on the subject until the Address-in-reply debate began. None of them, however, was able to set aside the statement made by the Premier. Their inability to do that on the Supply Bill debate induced them perhaps to revive the subject on the Address-in-reply. The member for York (Mr. Latham) referred to wire netting. There has been a good deal of discussion in the paper in this regard because the Commonwealth has set aside about £43,000 worth of netting for the use of distressed farmers in Western Australia.

Mr. Latham: Distressed farmers?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. I have not taken that position at all.

Mr. Latham: I have not applied for any.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member made many inquiries before any netting was given out, and I think he wanted some. When I took office I found that next to nothing had been done in the matter. Mr. Gregory communicated with me direct from Melbourne, and was very anxious to know what had been done to supply the farmers in this State with wire netting that the Commonwealth Government

were offering free of interest for 20 years. I told him I thought the Act was quite wrong. Although the Commonwealth Government provided the netting on these terms, the State Government carried the responsibility. Before any netting is supplied to a farmer, the Minister for Lands has to get an application signed, and he has to recommend it and send it to Melbourne for acceptance or refusal. That is a ridiculous system, as has been proved. Every recommendation we have sent over has been accepted.

Mr. Thomson: Why do they not hand the money to us?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It would have been better if the Commonwealth had made the money available to the State free of interest for 20 years for the supply of this netting. A condition was laid down that the netting had to be of Australian manufacture. That was all right, especially in view of the Customs duty on imported netting. Almost immediately after the netting was made available, however, the Commonwealth altered the duty on the imported article. Of the 1,000 rolls that I ordered for the group settlements, 200 rolls arrived, and I had to pay £111 as dumping duty. There was some difficulty in the first instance. I told a member in answer to a question the amount of netting approved by the Commonwealth. There has been a difficulty about supplying netting to those people whose properties are mortgaged to the Associated Banks. We require security for the amount involved in the netting supplied. I am pleased to say we have received word from the Associated Banks that they have approved of the granting of the security asked for, upon one or two conditions. The Under Secretary for Lands is now preparing forms to be signed and forwarded to the Commonwealth, by which means these people will get netting in the same way as those who come under the Agricultural Bank. The delay in this matter has occurred because the local banks had not received word from Melbourne. It will cost the State a considerable sum to administer this wire netting business. It is to be noted that, in almost every direction in which the Commonwealth make advances to the State, the State is held responsible for payment, and the administrative costs to the State are increased. In this particular case the officers of the department have to make sure the security offering is good. They have to go to the Agricultural Bank or private banks or the Titles Office to ascertain the state of the title. They have to see that the whole security is safe before the netting is handed over. They then have to prepare the necessary forms and send them to the Federal authorities.

Mr. Thomson: Has the Commonwealth Government asked the State to be responsible for the money?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We are responsible for all recommendations.

Mr. Thomson: Then why have they not given the money to the State?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Before the various applications can be sent forward a good deal of difficulty and trouble are incurred. I am pleased to say that every recommendation has so far been accepted by the Commonwealth Government.

Mr. Latham: You get £1 for every mile of netting applied for.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We are allowed £1 a mile, but that does not pay us.

Mr. Latham: It is almost as much as you are getting through the Agricultural Bank.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is to pay the administrative costs for the next 20 years. It will not, however, pay for the trouble taken in the first year. All that is charged to the farmer in addition to the contract price for the netting is the cost of handling and the railway freights. The Commonwealth Government will not advance money for the fastenings of netting, and these have to be provided either by the farmer or by the Agricultural Bank. I hope the time is not far distant when those farmers who are not connected with any Government institution will get their netting in the same way as the clients of the Agricultural Bank.

Mr. Latham: Have you sent out any yet?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Some has now come in. We had to call for tenders. As soon as we were sure of the money we did so. The netting has arrived, and the farmers will be supplied in due course. I do not say that every applicant will be supplied. Those whose securities are not adequate will not get it. I do not intend to deal with the many statements that have been made during this debate. I am, however, ashamed of my friend, the member for Swan (Mr. Sampson). He says he cannot offer his congratulations to the Government.

Mr. Chesson: Cheek!

Mr. Sampson: In what connection would you expect me to congratulate you?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: When the hon. member became Colonial Secretary I congratulated him.

Mr. Sampson: I was criticising a certain action of the Government.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is merely a change of government. For the time being the hon. member has taken the seat I occupied for several years.

Mr. George: We are happier over here.

Mr. Wilson: Long may you remain there.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: When we became the Opposition, not by votes at the general election, we did not take umbrage. My leader said we would do all we could to assist the Government in carrying on the affairs of State, owing to the difficulties in which the State found itself consequent upon the war. That undertaking

was carried out in its entirety. I hope the Opposition to-day will be as generous.

Mr. Latham: We shall.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: When we were in Opposition we were told that we were really the Government. It is true we kept the Government in power.

Mr. Thomson: To be consistent the people who said that should give you a lot of support.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We never expect from the party that opposed Labour the same consideration that the Labour Party always extended to it. We never got it, and we do not expect it. We speak from experience.

Mr. Heron: And you have not got it so far.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I can speak from two experiences. I was a member of the Daglish Government in 1904-5, and of the Scaddan Government from 1911 to 1916. I know the treatment meted out to us on both occasions.

Mr. Thomson: You had no right to exist in those days.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I know we shall not get the same consideration shown towards us as we showed towards the Opposition in those days. It is useless to expect it.

Mr. Latham: Then you will not be disappointed.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There has been an echo of that feeling already. For the first time since I became a member of this House, over 20 years ago, the Supply Bill was attacked this session, and the Leader of the Opposition moved for a reduction in the amount. In the face of that, how can we expect to receive the consideration that Labour, when in Opposition, gave to the Government?

Mr. George: You introduced a drastic alteration.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: We dissociate ourselves from that.

Mr. Sampson: In the circumstances there was some justification.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: There never was any.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: When we were in Opposition we realised the difficulties facing the Government. We knew it was necessary for us to render them every possible help. They were in a dilemma, and did not know how to get out of it. The Opposition had to assist in pulling them through, and we had to show them how to carry on the affairs of State and point out to them what was necessary for the advantage and progress of Western Australia. To a large extent they followed the proposals we placed before them. If they had followed our advice we should not to-day be faced with a deficit of over £6 000,000.

Mr. Richardson: You started it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It was a very small amount in our day.

The Premier: It was a trickle that grew into a river.

Mr. Thomson: And it is now a rushing torrent.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We repeatedly showed the Government the danger of going on as they were doing.

Mr. Richardson: According to your party.

The Premier: Which at that time was your party.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It will be a long time before we can wipe out that deficit.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: At the tea adjournment I was pointing out that we did not expect the same consideration from the Opposition that we displayed when we were sitting on the other side of the House. I do not think I will follow up that line of argument.

Mr. Richardson: No, it is dangerous.

Mr. Latham: At any rate, I do not think it is a good line of argument.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not know that it is dangerous, for I do not think there is much danger to be feared. The department placed under my control by the Premier is one in connection with which I have not had a great deal of experience. I do not profess to be an expert in regard to land, nor yet in regard to agriculture. It reminds me of an argument that took place in New South Wales, when the late Sir Henry Parkes was Premier of that State. Some members of the House were rather disappointed regarding the allocation of portfolios in his Ministry. A deputation waited upon Sir Henry and pointed out that the member who had been appointed Minister for Lands was better fitted to take charge of the Works Department, while the man chosen as Minister for Works was better qualified to carry out the functions of the Minister for Lands. Sir Henry said that if that was the trouble, the question was easy to settle. They had approached him in order to find out what his reasons were for appointing the Ministers to their respective portfolios. His reply was, "New South Wales pays for her experts." The same thing applies in this instance. Not possessing the knowledge that some people profess to have regarding these questions, it is necessary for me to rely to a large extent upon the experts attached to the department. In this instance Western Australia pays for her experts, and if we do not make use of the knowledge those officials possess, the State will not have the benefit of their experience. As to the Lands Department, one cannot touch it at any point without dealing with immigration, for immigration and land settlement are so related that one cannot deal with one section without touching upon the other. I regret that Western Australia, particularly regard-

ing wheat land, is not in the position of having areas available for settlement.

Mr. Mann: What about Esperance?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: When I say we have no wheat land available, I refer to land adjacent to railways or where the means of communication are such that they will enable settlers to have a reasonable chance of success with their farming operations. Land that is available is too far from the railways to enable farming to be maintained on a commercial basis. That point was brought home during the past week. East of Bendering one block of land was available and there were 92 applications for it. During the present week the Land Board will again sit to deal with applications for land thrown open for selection. There are 27 applications for one block at Southern Cross; 17 applications for two blocks in the Melbourne district, and 24 applications for one block in the Newdegate district. That proves that Western Australia has no areas adjacent to railways to offer for settlement. That is not to say that we have no land available, but I will deal with that point directly. What it shows is that we have no Crown lands adjacent to railways or in such a position that anyone desirous of taking up land and developing it can have the assistance of Government institutions, such as the Agricultural Bank. We have large areas of land of an inferior quality, but not such that I could recommend people to take up and develop. Hon. members will have noticed that recently the Agent General wrote to the Premier stating that owing to the advertisement gained at the Wembley Exhibition Western Australia would be able to get large numbers of migrants with capital. I ask hon. members this question: Can we honestly put before persons from England or from any other part of the world an invitation to come to Western Australia with their capital in order to settle on land that is on the market, and depend entirely upon these holdings?

Mr. Mann: You are referring to Crown lands.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I refer to land on the market. When a person comes here with capital and desires to settle on the land, it is the duty of the Government, immediately that person arrives in Western Australia, to see that propositions are placed before him so that he can get land such as he desired when he left England. The State has no Crown lands to-day within a reasonable distance of railways, in order to enable the Government to do that. In these circumstances it is difficult to encourage people with money to come here to take up land. Realising this, I made inquiries when I took office as to the position regarding Crown lands in the wheat areas. We know we have land in the southern portions of the State, but large areas of land there are controlled, unfortunately, by the Forests Department and the Minister for Lands has no

power over them. That is to say, he has no power unless he kicks up a row with the Conservator of Forests, and that has to be done occasionally in order to get land. The fact remains that we have no power to take it away from him. Where land carries two loads of timber to the acre, the Forests Department contend it must be reserved for forestry.

Mr. Mann: That loadage is a bit too low.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It used to be four loads to the acre at one time, but now it has dwindled down to two loads and there is difficulty in getting land in the South-West, because of the presence of marketable timber.

Mr. George: That land is held for the purpose of reforestation.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Forests Department is still trying to get some of it, but has not got it yet. I am following the practice of the ex-Minister for Lands in not dedicating the areas required.

Mr. Mann: Four loads to the acre is a reasonable margin.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I thought it was necessary that we should have particulars as to the area of land available in Western Australia and I was pleased to hear an hon. member refer to the light lands just now. We have large areas of light lands, much larger than I anticipated when I first made inquiries. The trouble is that this land has not been proved yet and we do not know definitely whether it is suitable for settlement or not. The member for York (Mr. Latham) is optimistic but the Agricultural Department is carrying out certain tests regarding those areas. I have a return dealing with light lands which I will read to hon. members. It is as follows:—

We have unalienated light lands within 12½ miles of existing railways as follows: Along the Great Southern railway and spurs, 2,504,000 acres; along the Ravensthorpe-Hopetoun railway, 540,000 acres; in the wet South-West (Bunbury, Pemberton and Augusta), 620,000 acres; in the South-West (Boyup, Bunbury to Pinjarra), 740,000 acres; Esperance-Salmon Gums, 551,000 acres; along the Midland railway and Wongan Hills railway, 2,570,000 acres; along the Ajana railway, 474,000 acres; on the goldfields (Dowerin, Mt. Marshall), 1,129,000 acres; giving a total of 9,128,000 acres.

Hon. members will see from these details that if it can be proved that light land is suitable for agricultural development, we will have large areas available. I know that it will be necessary for men to hold considerable areas and I would not object to a man taking up 5,000 acres of light land in order to provide for sheep to enable him to pay his way. We must have proof first so that we can tell intending settlers that the experience has been that they can grow

crops to enable them to run sheep and so tide them over times of drought or dry seasons of the year. When we can say from experience that settlement on the light lands is a safe proposition, then we can offer to people from the old world the nine million acres within 12 miles or so of a railway as indicated by the return I have read. While we have that large acreage, we are unfortunately not yet in the position to say to the intending settler, "There is the land, take it and develop it, and you will be successful in a few years." There is still doubt about it.

Mr. Lindsay: Why not collect the evidence of those who have already been successful on light land?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In my opinion the department is not yet in a position to say that settlement on the light land is a payable proposition.

Mr. Latham: The Agricultural Bank has information on that point.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In consequence, I think I would be doing wrong if I, as Minister for Lands, acted contrary to the expert opinion of the departmental officers. I might do the State as big an injury as a wild-cat mining proposition would do.

Mr. Thomson: There is a man at Meckering who can give you information as to the light lands.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The member for Irwin (Mr. C. C. Maley) is doing good work along these lines. He is making inquiries with a view to taking up several thousand acres of light land. The member for Irwin has a grazing lease and intends converting it to conditional purchase conditions. If he is able to succeed and so prove the capabilities of the light land, then we will have in that part of the State some 2,570,000 acres of similar land available for selection. In the meantime I would be wrong to advise people to go there until I have expert information enabling me to say that if they invest their money there they will succeed eventually.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Practical experience has shown that you cannot do anything of the sort.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: These blocks, totalling 9,128,000 acres, do not include the land east of Pindar on the Murchison railway, nor that east of Ghooli on the Eastern Goldfields line. We have a very large area of good land, but without means of communication. When we are in a position—I regret we are not at present—to open up those lands by railway, we shall have a tremendous area on which we can encourage people to settle. I do not agree with the member for York (Mr. Latham) in his criticism of the member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson) in respect of railways. When we have a large area of land it is of great advantage to the State to construct a railway to it, even before selection.

Mr. Latham: I did not say it would not be.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But you said that railways could not profitably be run out directly because of the varying classes of the land. However, the classifiers know the varying qualities of the land, and it is just as easy to put down a railway before selection to open up suitable land, even where there is mixed up with it an area of inferior land, as it would be after selection; because the land will not be altered, and the classifiers can submit their classifications to the railway surveyors.

Mr. Latham: I remember they sent out a surveyor to an immense area of land in which there was not 1,000 acres of first class country.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Between the district south of Salmon Gums and Norseman, Mr. Surveyor Brown has been classifying. He is now in the North-West, surveying land near Wyndham for cotton growing. He states that in the southern area there are 198,000 acres. West of Norseman to the No. 1 rabbit-proof fence, classified by Mr. Inspector McLeod, there are 3,950,000 acres.

Mr. Thomson: There are no railways there.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, there are no railways. South of Zanthus, to Eyre, a classification by Mr. Inspector McLeod shows 3,000,000 acres. East of the Esperance railway, in the vicinity of Mount Ridley, there is an area of 450,000 acres, and east of Nugadong there are 76,000 acres. Between the Great Southern Railway and the No. 1 rabbit-proof fence there are 320,000 acres, and north of Benenbbin, the classification now being carried out, there are 205,000 acres, or a total of 7,839,000 acres of good land. So we have an enormous area ready for development, and another enormous area of which the same could be said if only we had means of communication.

Mr. Thomson: Would it not be possible, when dealing with people with money, to make special arrangements for putting out railways?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Some railways approved by Parliament in 1915 have not yet been constructed. So in the Lands Department we cannot say to a man "Here is a large area of good land we can offer you, and on which you will be able to earn a good livelihood," because the land is not served by a railway, and there are no means of communication. As will be seen in the Governor's Speech, we propose to bring in a Bill for a railway from Salmon Gums to Norseman, to open up 198,000 acres. The rainfall is reported to be good, and the land supposed to be considerably superior to that further south, in what is known as the Esperance district. When you look at the map showing a large area of good land out east of the Norse-

man-hesperance railway, it is surprising to see so great a territory lying idle. We have no means of offering it to people with capital until we construct a railway.

Mr. Latham: You are satisfied that the rainfall is all right?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: According to the reports it is better than that in some of the districts on the eastern railway now profitably growing wheat. However, that is the position. I regret it, because every day I have applications for land. In addition to men with money we have large numbers of native-born applicants who require the assistance of the Agricultural Bank. But the Agricultural Bank will not render assistance, because the land is more than 12½ miles from a railway. In some cases the bank will advance up to 13 or even 15 miles from a line, but the trustees are very cautious about such properties, realising the risk. Consequently, to-day the whole of our readily available lands may be said to have been selected. By that I do not necessarily mean that they are in use under cultivation, for, admittedly, we have millions of acres taken up but not cultivated. I hope that, as the result of the Closer Settlement Bill, it will be possible to bring those lands into use and so overcome one of our great difficulties. When first I went to the Lands Department I inspected the maps to see what land was available. It is surprising to note along the Wangan Hills railway large areas that the officers consider unsuitable for offering to the public, land said to be of inferior quality. Members will realise the difficulty the department is in when people complain that Lands officers will not tell them where they can get a block of land. Of course it is because the officers do not desire to place men on land from which they could not make a comfortable living. I do not intend to deal further with our lands at this juncture, except to say that applications for land were never more numerous than at present. Unfortunately we cannot find land for the applicants. However, it is clear that applications for land are by no means falling off. As you know, the Minister for Lands administers the Agricultural Bank, Soldier Settlement, and the Industries Assistance Board. Of late the officers of that department have been controlling it under extreme difficulty. The State's money invested in those three institutions is approximately 11 millions, or one-fifth of the State's indebtedness. We do not want those institutions to break down under their own weight. It has fallen to this Government to carry into effect an action taken by the late Government just before leaving office. It means a good deal of worry, with many a severe headache, in consequence of persons objecting to the action of the previous Government in issuing notices to certain farmers. On the 31st March last the total amount owing to the Agricultural Bank by farmers, outside of soldier settlement, was £3,246,709, including

£204,493 arrears of interest and £469,724 arrears of principal.

Mr. Latham: I suppose they are principally Industries Assistance Board clients.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am doubtful about that, because for long past it has been the practice for the Government to see to it that debts due to the Bank and other departments are paid and charged up. Many people to-day are on the Industries Assistance Board under Clause "C," which means that the Board pay merely land rent and similar fees for the purpose of preventing forfeiture. So the Industries Assistance Board has been paying the amounts due to the Agricultural Bank for the purpose of retaining the land for the holder. Apart altogether from interest, there is nearly half a million of money due for principal. This money was borrowed at a low rate of interest. What an advantage it would be to the State to-day to have that half a million to use in other directions, instead of using money carrying 6½ per cent. interest! I regret to have to mention this matter, but hon. members must know the exact position. The Agricultural Bank has done good work in the past, but the trustees feel that the time has arrived when, to save the good name of the bank, those persons who are not making any attempt to pay the amounts due must be prepared to see their securities realised. Under the Soldier Settlement Scheme, the report of which is on the Table, the total advances are £5,839,495. This scheme also is controlled by the trustees of the Agricultural Bank, with Capt. Throssell, V.C., who directly represents soldier settlement. Yet this year the arrears of interest have risen from £169,365 to £217,906, an increase of £48,551.

Mr. Thomson: A good deal of that is compound interest.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That does not make any difference as regards the State. I think we should alter the name and call it accommodation interest. There has been great objection to paying this interest because it is called penal interest, yet it is only the interest that the Government have to pay when they borrow money to meet the interest. Every institution adopts that method. If the farmer does not pay his interest within two months of the due date and the Government have to find it for him, he is charged additional interest on the money borrowed to pay the interest. That is only businesslike. It is provided for in the Act and there is nothing penal about it. It represents merely the payment of a just due. A Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into settlement under the soldier settlement scheme. The commission recommended that a committee should be appointed to deal with each case on its merits. The idea was that the committee could consider the case of each individual farmer, inquire into his liabilities and assets and the quality of his land and see what could be done to assist him to make progress. They also had to

consider the amount paid for the holding, the amount charged for repurchased estates, and the cost of clearing prior to taking up a repurchased estate; and recommend to the Minister any deduction that should be made. So far the committee have dealt with 263 cases and have 89 additional cases under consideration. They have also to deal with the question of clearing costs on the Cascade and Capeldene Estates. Soldiers have been given until the 31st August to send into the committee requests for their cases to be dealt with. After the 31st August the committee will be unable to accept any more applications for consideration. This was done on the advice of the committee. They had only one or two applications coming in at odd times and often after returning from a trip to the country to inquire into the affairs of one settler, received an application from another man in the same district. This necessitated a duplication of expense that would have been avoided if the two inspections could have been made on the one trip. Therefore they considered it necessary to fix a date on which applications should be lodged so that the work could be done more economically. When the suggestion was made, the soldiers were given two months in which to send in their applications.

Mr. Thomson: Did that appear in the public Press?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, in every newspaper. The committee have recommended reductions amounting to £32,423 in the advances made by the Government on behalf of the soldiers. Of this amount £20,106 has already been approved. In addition the Agricultural Bank has written off £37,916. The committee have also recommended the writing down of the Noombling Estate by £10,665, and of the Piesse's Brook Estate by £8,354. Where farms have been purchased on the walk-in-walk-out basis, it is almost impossible for a committee four years afterwards to say whether the purchaser got a fair deal. I shall quote one instance, giving actual figures: A is a soldier who desired a certain farm. B is a seller. A goes to B and asks "for what will you sell me your holding on the walk-in-walk-out principle." B quotes £4,250 for everything as it stands, house, furniture, stock, plant and crops. A submits the offer to the Soldier Settlement Board. The board make an investigation, call for Inspector's reports, and have the property examined, and when the reports are received, they consider the application. In this instance the board's decision was, "No we shall not pay this amount for that farm. The price is too high." The application was rejected. After a little while A again went to the farmer and told him the board considered the price too high, and after negotiations, the price was reduced by £500. A again approached the Soldier Settlement Board and asked that it be purchased for him at the price of £3,750. The reports were favourable at that price and the board

recommended its purchase to the bank trustees. The trustees of the bank are practical men consisting of Mr. McLarty, managing trustee, Mr. C. J. Moran, who has had much farming experience, and Mr. Cook, of Northam, who has been on the land all his life. They are the responsible body. It is they who find the money. They are responsible on behalf of the Government. They investigated and considering the price fair, purchased the farm for £3,750. Three or four years elapsed, and the soldier then asked the committee to make a further investigation and to say in effect that he had paid £750 too much for the land. The committee say to the Agricultural Bank trustees, "You must lose this £750 and must not charge interest on it from the date on which the man took possession." Then the facts are placed before me to decide which of the three boards is correct. It is an impossible position. I made inquiries from outside persons who knew the holding and they informed me that it had deteriorated considerably since the present occupants took charge. The committee do not know what stock was there when the land was taken over, and they do not know what plant was there.

Mr. Thomson: Surely the Bank has a record of the stock?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But it is necessary to consider the condition of the farm. Some farmers leave their plant lying about so that in two or three years it is spoilt by the weather. My opinion is that no committee coming on the scene four years afterwards can say what the value of the farm was at the date of purchase. I do not feel disposed to write off that £750. While we have been recommended to wipe off those amounts totalling £32,423, there are a considerable number of soldiers whose interest has been capitalised to permit of their paying it off in instalments, so that they might overcome the difficulty in which they find themselves at present. All the soldiers are not the same; this applies to only some of them. The reports show that many of the farmers who have had land purchased for them have made considerable progress. The officers, who are experienced men, disagree entirely with some of the recommendations made by the committee, but that is the position of soldier settlement to-day. I have mentioned two institutions that come under my control as Minister for Lands. Then we have the I.A.B.

The Premier: There everything is right.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We introduced the Bill for the establishment of the board, but I have stated in this House repeatedly that it was a class of legislation that would never have been passed by Parliament under normal conditions. It was passed during an abnormal period. The measure was introduced, as the ex-member for Avon used to say, in order to save the State. It saved not only the State, but a number of farmers.

Mr. Latham: That is so.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I need not traverse its history because members are fully aware of the position. The board have done very well. Since the inception they have advanced over eight millions of money, but the proceeds have not equalled the advances. To the 30th June of this year the total liabilities of the Board to the Treasury were £2,310,898. The amount owing to the Treasury on the 31st March last was £2,002,862, and the further borrowings from the 31st March to the 30th June amounted to £308,036. These are large figures. Members should realise that the men who are administering the Agricultural Bank, the Soldier Settlement Scheme and the I.A.B. have to contend with many difficulties. They have to deal with the farmer in such a manner as to protect the State's security. Against the liability to the Treasury there was owing by clients on the 31st March, 1924, so far as we can gather at present, a sum of £1,718,717. The value of the wheat in the pool was £238,740. There was a credit balance at the Treasury on the board's current account of £68,013, making a total of £2,026,271. Hon. members will recognise that there is a large amount of money still owing by the farmers to the Industries Assistance Board.

Mr. Thomson: What is it composed of? Land rents?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No; advances for the cropping of settlers. It takes, I understand, an average of £825,000 a year for cropping; so I can claim to control large private farming in Western Australia at the present time. The figures show that it is necessary for the trustees to exercise care and caution. During the board's financial year which ended on the 31st March last there was paid away to outside creditors £6,087. Those are creditors who existed at the time the board was formed, in 1914. Claims withdrawn by creditors, either wholly or partly, amounted to £7,408. There is still a balance due to outside creditors of £298,205. That is additional to the amount owing to the Agricultural Bank.

Mr. Richardson: The creditors get interest on that amount.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They are not getting any interest now, but they have the right to charge it at the rate of 8 per cent. No doubt they do charge it when the debtor has money with which to pay interest. Members are aware that two or three years ago, I think during Sir James Mitchell's absence in England, several committees were appointed for the purpose of investigating the affairs of Industries Assistance Board settlers. Those committees were nominated, the majority being appointed by a political party. We raised objection to that, because we did not think it right that any political organisation should have the opportunity of selecting committees to deal with affairs of State.

Mr. Latham: That is one of the occasions on which you were wrong.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Possibly. However, the objection was not in any way derogatory to the representatives nominated, who, as far as I can gather, acted quite honestly. They had to inquire into the value of the settler's land, take into consideration the stock he held, and value the plant, and also take into consideration the amount owing to outside creditors. Then they had to form an opinion of what could be done to assist the man to a sound financial position. If they did not think the man was likely to make a success of his holding, they were to recommend to the board what action should be taken. The total number of reports made to the board was 324, and the members of the board have stated that the reports were of great assistance to them. By means of the reports they were enabled to deal with a number of clients, but they did not accept the committees' recommendations in their entirety, because in many cases they had a fuller knowledge of the position as to the land. Sometimes they found it necessary to depart from the recommendations contained in the reports. As a result of the reports 140 settlers were given notice requiring them to pay off their overdrafts by the 30th June. I believe the notices were given in February, or else early in March, of this year. But in issuing those notices the board were acting in accordance with the recommendations of the committees. In some instances the settler still had advances made to him so that he could remain on the holding, to prevent this depreciating for the purpose of sale. Again, the settler might still have advances made to him to get superphosphate, so that he could crop the land. This was done in a considerable number of cases. However, when the notices were issued it was also stated that there would be a further inspection on or after 30th June, to ascertain whether the settler had made any effort to improve his position. The precaution proved to be a wise one in a good many instances. Frequently the result was to induce the board to alter their previous decision. Twenty-three settlers were asked for immediate repayment. 27 settlers have been given until the 1st September, two settlers have been allowed three months to effect settlement, 15 have had assistance after they were notified that they were required to close their accounts. Fourteen will be given further consideration after the coming harvest, and 14 others have been asked to submit proposals to carry themselves on without further assistance. The total number of settlers notified with regard to their position under the board was 221. The board do not desire to take extreme steps. If the settler can show that there is a possibility of making a success of his holding and can show that he has tried his best, the board will assist him as far as they can. I repeat that if any accusation should be made against the board, it is an accusation of leniency and

not of harshness. During the debate two or three members expressed the opinion that the board should write down amounts owing to the Agricultural Bank, or else fund them. The object is to prevent a man from losing the benefit of his work if the property is put up for sale. I do not know whether hon. members are aware that the board have no legal power to write off any liability.

Mr. Thomson: We knew that. That is what we wanted the late Government to amend.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If a settler's difficulties are not the result of his own fault, if he has been placed in financial difficulties through the failure of crops or other unforeseen circumstances, and the board realise that he is a man who can be trusted, and one who will endeavour to carry out his undertaking, in such a case the board should be given the opportunity to write off liabilities and let him remain on his holding with a view to making good. It is my intention to introduce during this session a Bill giving the necessary power. It has been urged that it would not be right to give a statutory board power to write down liabilities. If there is any danger attaching to that at all, it lies in the making of the advances. If a board can be trusted to advance the funds of the State, surely such a board, and especially one carrying on such large transactions, can be trusted to write off liabilities if it is necessary to do so.

Mr. Richardson: Don't you think you are duplicating the danger? The board may have made one mistake and then may make another.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That makes no difference to the State. Assuming for the moment that the board wished to be dishonest, they would advance too much, and then they would only have to put the property on the market, with the result that the Government would lose the difference between the amount of advance and interest and the price realised.

Mr. Richardson: They might be duplicating the mistake.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not see it. From what I can gather, if the board had been previously empowered as is now proposed, many of the settlers would not now be indebted to the board in such large amounts. The only result has been to heap up the man's liabilities and make it more difficult for him to get clear.

Mr. Richardson: You should ascertain whether the board were wrong in the first instance.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Most of us have a certain amount of charity, and consequently refuse to do what seems an injustice to a man if he is using his best endeavours to make a livelihood.

Mr. Richardson: Two wrongs do not make a right.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It makes no difference to the State, because

if the realisation will not bring the amount advanced, the State loses; and then the State might get a worse man on the land. It comes back to the personal equation.

Mr. Richardson: You should look into the old methods of the board.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Hon. members should realise that there is no security, in regard to advances for cropping, except the crop itself. If the season is a failure, there is no crop and no security, and the State's money is gone. The State has to wait another 12 months before it can get anything at all on account of the money advanced previously, and then the State has to make a further advance for the purpose of getting back what had been advanced the year before. That is the position, and I cannot see anything wrong in the proposal. Hon. members will have an opportunity to discuss the Bill before the session is over. At present the clients of the board number 1,808. Under Clause "C," which applies to payment of rent, rates, interest, etc., there are 225, while 589 are still attached to the board without being rendered further assistance. So we get a total of 2,722. The number of persons that have gone off the board is 1,258. So the board has been the means of saving 1,258 farmers, and the State has benefited accordingly.

Mr. Lindsay: Does that include soldier settlement?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Some soldiers are on the board; indeed a great number of the board's clients are soldiers. I have endeavoured to show the position of those three institutions. I want the assistance of hon. members in quieting the minds of a number of settlers on the land. I confidently credit the board with tact. I believe they will take no undue advantage, that they will endeavour to assist the man who helps himself. But for the man who does not help himself, who sells the board's securities, there will be no sympathy from the board nor from me.

Mr. Thomson: We shall have no sympathy with him either.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Now let me come to group settlement and immigration. I cannot separate the one from the other. The agreement made by Sir James Mitchell took effect on the 25th September, 1922. None of the migrants that arrived before that date come under that agreement. Under it there have been brought out to the State 17,168 persons, including 3,617 who paid their own third-class fare. Assisted and nominated migrants number 7,560 men, 3,824 women, and 3,268 children. Of those, 1,374 who left England after the date of the agreement are now on groups, 286 of them being on repurchased land, and so not coming under the agreement. In another place there has been some criticism of that agreement. I am not going to condemn its maker, neither am I going to hold up as models those who have improved on it. When we

have an existing agreement, it is much easier to improve on it than to make a fresh one. The other States have improved on the agreement made on behalf of Western Australia. In my opinion due consideration was not given before the agreement was entered into by the British Government and the Commonwealth Government. We were imbued with the idea that the British Government and the Commonwealth Government were going to assist us in settling our South-West, but when we weigh the matter we find that the assistance given by those Governments is very small indeed. As one who comes from the Old Country I am ashamed of my country in this respect. Of course many years ago I was taught that Nature had implanted in my breast an indissoluble attachment to the country whence I derived my birth and my infant-nurture. However, while that might have been so then, Australia, after years of experience, comes dearer to me now than even the Old Land. That has appealed to me on several occasions when we have seen the British Government offering millions of money to foreign countries, not knowing whether it will ever be repaid, yet squabbling over a shilling to their own people until it is hardly worth taking. I think a good deal of the present position of migration and group settlement was brought about through those who make the agreements not coming into touch with the actual position out here. As you are aware, in his agreement Sir James Mitchell agreed that we should take 6,000 settlers and provide for 69,000 other persons, including wives and families of the settlers. For taking all those 75,000 people from England, the British Government for five years are to assist us by paying one-third of the interest on £6,000,000, and the Commonwealth to pay one-third, while Western Australia is to pay the remaining third. It has been found from experience that it is impossible to put any settler on the groups for £1,000. So it is going to cost many millions more to settle the 6,000 settlers than was estimated, and the position to-day, as the member for York (Mr. Latham) pointed out, is that if we never put one solitary man on a group from this time forward, we shall require this year £976,750 to pay the cost of those already there. Consequently the Government hardly know where to find money to carry on these groups.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: Why not start groups in the wheat belt, where they would cost so much less?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have dealt with that. We have not the land. Under Sir James Mitchell's agreement, the State has to provide the land free. Again the rebate of interest to be enjoyed by the State applies only to migrants; so, if an Australian goes on the group, the State has to carry the full interest. At present we have approximately 800 Australians on the groups.

Mr. Richardson: You will have to send the Premier to the Old Country to fix things up.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We have in existence 124 groups, composed of 2,287 settlers, which means that we are opening up 2,287 farms. I have been through most of the groups, except the Peel Estate, and I must admit that the work being done is wonderful. In some instances the cost has been heavy. The man who started first had to learn by experience. When the Royal Commission investigates the question they may be able to advise a different scheme of clearing from that in vogue. My own belief is that instead of bringing out from England persons, many of whom have never seen an axe, and putting them on to fall heavy timber, it would be better to clear the land by contract. Then the migrants on arrival could help in the burning off and general clearing up. Under that plan the settlers would get on to their respective holdings much earlier than they do at present. Just before the tea adjournment I referred to the remarks made by the member for York (Mr. Latham) about community interest. I dealt with the position as it will be in years to come, when the people will have control. The trend of events for many years past has leaned in that direction. However, the greatest disagreement existing in the groups to-day is in the community part, and the sooner we can transfer those persons from the community to their respective holdings, the greater will be the benefit to the State and to themselves. At present the policy is to endeavour to get a large area of land cleared before the men go on to their holdings. A few weeks after their arrival they are allotted their blocks by ballot. The consequence is that outside group work the men make special efforts at clearing areas for their houses. But when such an area is cleared no house is ready to go on it, and the settler and his family are still kept huddled in a one-roomed or two-roomed shack. In some places I have seen a man with his wife and three or four children in one room 12ft. x 12ft., and they have remained there for several months. It is a disgrace to Western Australia. However, I am not going to put all the blame on the officers. At Denmark the doctor drew my attention to the position as it affected one family. Many children around were suffering from colds. There were no wooden floors in the huts. Water was oozing up from underneath. When the children got out of bed in the morning they stepped on to the wet ground. The doctor pointed out to me the danger. I went and saw the house. The bunks in it were arranged after the manner of those in a ship. There was a small table in the hut, and in consequence there was not room in which to turn round, the place being only 12ft. x 12ft. The family had been there for some months. I was disgusted. Straightway I sent a wire to the Comptroller of Stores instructing him to forward corrugated

iron immediately, so that the settlers might add another room to each shack while they had the timber there for the construction of the frame work. Although the iron was sent down immediately, those men would not put up an additional room for their own comfort unless they were paid for doing it in group time! Then again I went to the Peel Estate and saw something similar there. I asked two people on Group 82, "How can you manage to live in this place?" There were a man, his wife and several children. I said, "Why don't you get another room put up?" The reply was, "If we get another room put up, it will be longer before we get our own house." I have been informed that iron has been sent there to provide extra accommodation and that it has not been used.

Mr. George: I know of many places where they wanted iron and could not get it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I took steps to get the houses erected as early as possible. I am pointing out the disabilities with which some of these people have to put up. All are not like that. A great majority of them have two good rooms. Owing to the bad roads there has been some difficulty in carting the timber to the shacks, but an Australian would not wait for flooring timber to be provided; he would cut it in the bush for himself. Then, men with large families find it very difficult to exist on the amount advanced by the Government. They fail to realise that the Government agreed to pay 10s. per day sustenance, or £3 per week, to help them to develop their land. That might sound very well, and looking at it from a city point of view, one would think that £3 per week would be sufficient. They have no rent or water charges to pay, and they have no firewood to buy. They get £3 per week ready cash. If they lose time, they have an opportunity to make it up on Saturday. But there is another side of the question. Most of the migrants arriving to-day—there are some exceptions—are in debt to the British Government and the Commonwealth Government. The British Government advance £5 10s. towards their fare and the Commonwealth Government advance an equal amount, a total of £11. Then they lend to the migrants the balance of £22, and if they have no money they can get £3 landing fee. There is also an additional pound, so that a single man comes here £26 in debt, and a married man would be indebted still more heavily. One family owed £90 to the Government for fares. These people then are coming here not only penniless, but with a debt round their necks. They signed an undertaking in England agreeing to pay the Government at the rate of 10s. per week, or £2 a month, after the first month. These amounts must be paid to the Immigration Officer, St. George's-terrace, Perth. I do not know how members regard this, but I contend that we are finding money to develop our land and not to pay passages. The honest man who intends to pay consequently

worries considerably over this debt when the dockets come in every month and he is not in a position to pay. By the time these settlers have provided for their sick and benefit fund, and paid into their hospital fund and paid their instalment towards furniture and bedding, their £3 per week is reduced to £2 5s. Then again 6d. per pound difference in the price of butter, to say nothing of equally disproportionate rates for other commodities as compared with city prices, is altogether too great.

Mr. Thomson: Robbing the poor beggars!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am not going to deal with the storekeepers now. Since I have been taking an interest in the group settlements I have discovered that not only the storekeepers but Government officers as well are treating the settlers badly. If they want appliances from any of the Government departments they are charged double what they ought to be charged. The Minister for Works put down some large machines to drain the Peel Estate. The life of those machines is supposed to be 15 years, but the department set such a rate that the machines would be paid for in two years. The same applies to horses and drays and everything else. Extortionate charges have been imposed upon the group settlers.

Mr. Thomson: No wonder many departments are showing a profit.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Further, I know of no farmer in this State who has had to pay a license fee for keeping explosives; yet the department under the instructions of the Auditor General, is asking the group settlers to pay such a fee. I told the Treasurer they were not going to get license fees out of me.

Mr. George: On some of the groups settlers were charged for the scrub grass eaten by their cows.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Pastures have been provided out of the funds of some of the groups, and the amount charged for depasturing cows and horses goes back into the group funds.

Mr. George: In some cases that does not apply.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not see why one man should have the benefit of another man's work. He should pay for agistment there just as he would have to pay a private person.

Mr. George: In the place I refer to nothing of that sort is done.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Dealing with the groups generally, I am one of those who believe they are going to be a success. The Royal Commission to be appointed may find ways in which the costs can be reduced. The position, however, appeals to me in this way: When I visited Pemberton some weeks ago, and saw the beautiful land there, it reminded me of the old country more than any other place I have seen in Australia. It appeared to me that if people in the Eastern States could make dairying pay on land no better, so the experts inform me, for which

they give £75 per acre, surely our people should be able to make it pay on land costing £40 per acre.

Mr. George: It all depends whether they have markets.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But the market is here. The primary object of group settlement is dairying. Everything else must be a side line. The worst feature of the groups is that no provision has been made to enable the men to earn their own livelihood from the time the clearing is done until they are able to start their dairy farms. To-day there are three groups doing other work for the purpose of sustenance, because no provision has been made for the purchase of cattle. This year a large number of groups will complete their work on the group system. I have been advised that two years ago the departmental officer wanted to purchase stock when offering at a suitable rate in order to be prepared for the time when groups completed their work. Nothing of that kind was done. To-day the officers are buying suitable cattle wherever they can get them, in order to supply those people who are now ready to go on to their own blocks. Another mistake in regard to group settlement: I said it had been the department's desire that groups should have their areas of land cleared before they made any attempt at dairying. This accounts for the settlers having been kept in the shacks so long. In 12 months every man fit to remain in a group should be in a position to run a cow. This would attain two objects: In the first place it would assist him by augmenting his maintenance, and in the second place it would teach him and his wife—probably they have never seen a cow except from the window of the train when travelling to join their ship—to understand and milk a cow. It would be better for a settler to spoil one cow rather than 10 cows. I have issued instructions that each man must be provided with a cow at the earliest opportunity, and also with a pig. An effort must be made to provide fowls, because men with families cannot live on the amount of sustenance we provide.

The Premier: Besides, it would give them an interest in their blocks.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Some of the settlers have as many as nine or ten children.

Mr. George: And more coming!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have been to Busselton but I shall not tell the hon. member the result. When I was at Denmark a few months ago, I visited No. 2 Devon and Cornwall group. The women waited on me, and asked me to impress upon the Minister for Education the necessity for providing a school at once. One woman told me they had 60 children in that group. I replied, "Only 60?" She said, "What do you mean?" I said, "You are not keeping up the reputation of your county.

Group No. 116, consisting of 19 families, has 92 children." She replied, "Well, give us a school and we will quickly get up to them."

Mr. Panton: Did you give them a school?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am pointing out some of the difficulties of the people on the groups. I have issued instructions that any man on a group can shift his shack to his own holding when sufficient of his clearing has been effected. His family will then be able to assist him to continue his clearing, and establish gardens and grow vegetables to assist in the maintenance of the family. This is better than keeping on the settlers in their communities, as has been done for the last two years. The men on the groups have been asking for this for some time. I hope they will now avail themselves of the opportunity, and realise that if they want to make a success of their farms they must assist themselves. If they will do this the Government will then help to build up their farms as quickly as possible.

Mr. Panton: How many cows does a settler require to make a success of dairying?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I will tell the hon. member later. Since the groups have been in existence, 2,287 farms have come into being, or are in the course of preparation. There have been cleared 21,613 acres, ploughed 16,625 acres, and sown in pasture 11,845 acres. Unfortunately this year we have had difficulty in procuring seed, with a result that a smaller acreage has been sown than was intended. A fair acreage has been put down in oats with the object of overcoming that difficulty. The member for Menzies (Mr. Panton) wanted to know how many cows a settler required before he could commence dairying. I have asked the advisory committee to prepare a statement showing what it is intended to supply to these settlers when they are ready to become dairy farmers. The men on the groups are anxious to know this, for not one of them understands the position. We are allowed six millions of money for the settlement of 6,000 migrants from the Old Country, equal to £1,000 per settler. I hope I am not wearying members.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: No. This is the first we have heard about it all.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have here the proposed estimate of what it is intended shall form future average costs for the settlers. When the work was first begun the cost of clearing was very high. I will deal first with the heavily timbered country. For the erection of the shack there is allowed—labour, £10; depreciation of group plant, £20; clearing 25 acres at £25 an acre, £625; ploughing, etc., £50; seed and manure, £75; carting (fodder, horse hire), £50; fencing 160 acres with three wires, £60; 25 acres netted, £70; house,

£240 (this will cost a little more); shed, £10; dairy, £30; water supply, £20; ten cows, £150; pigs, £8; horses, £30; cart, £25; harness, £7; plough £8; harrow, £4; tools, £15; separator and cans, £10; supervision, £50; insurance, £10; interest capitalised, £100, and sundries £23, a total of £1,700. In connection with light land holdings, £250 is included for drainage. It is estimated that the cost for each settler on light land will be £1,600. It will thus be realised that £6,000,000 for 6,000 settlers will not be sufficient. In order to settle these people in group settlements it will be necessary to borrow a further £4,000,000.

Mr. Thomson: Very much more.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: A little over £10,000,000 will be required to settle these people. Not only have we to provide this money for their settlement, but we have to provide for roads and railways. The estimated cost of the first portion of the Pemberton railway is at the rate of over £12,000 a mile.

The Premier: It is £250,000 for the first 20 miles.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: We also have to provide for a certain portion of drainage in some places, for this will have to be a national work. Further, schools and hospitals will have to be provided.

The Premier: All such public utilities.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: This cannot come out of the £10,000,000. When we compare the position of the British Government, who have been relieved to a large extent of paying unemployment doles, and the position of the Commonwealth Government, who have gained considerably through the Customs upon every person who arrived, we must see that the charge upon this State is enormous.

Mr. Thomson: It is a lovely thing for the Imperial Government. They are getting rid of their unemployed, and we are carrying the burden.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: I take second place to no one in Western Australia in a desire to fill our empty spaces. I have always strongly supported immigration and have supported land settlement throughout. The time, however, has arrived when we must realise our position in this matter, and when we should pause and think whether we are drifting.

The Premier: We shall not be meeting the interest for the first six or seven years, and that will have to be capitalised again.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am not pessimistic, but I do want members to know the position.

Mr. Thomson: We have had more information to-night than ever in the past.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: The figures I have presented to the House are derived from a statement prepared by the

advisory committee as a result of a meeting held last week. I was not previously in possession of the information. I did not know what was intended, and I do not think the committee knew either. I asked them, however, to go into the matter so that I might inform the men on the groups what to expect when they had finished their clearing, and had prepared the land sufficiently to enable them to go on to it. We have been told there is any amount of land for group settlement in this State. I stated just now that although there was plenty of land here there were no means of communication to it. When we took office I found that many new arrivals were coming here. When I first visited the Immigration Home, on Easter Monday, I found that 14 or 15 families were waiting to go on to groups. They had been at the institution for three or four weeks, and wanted to know when they were to get out. They said that being idle would do them more harm than anything else, and that it was not so easy to start work again after a period of inactivity. They desired to get to work as early as possible. I found from inquiry that the only land in view that was suitable for settlement was sufficient for merely seven groups. There were 160 passengers on the way. I, therefore, had 160 families coming within a month and not a block to put them on. It was necessary to get the officers to work at once. I have been the means, unwillingly, of sending these people out further from a railway than I would have done under normal conditions. I would not be justified in sending any group settlers 25 miles from a railway, where there are no roads and no means of communication. The roads have had to be built since. The settlers are out in the heart of the bush, and cannot get a railway for at least two years. In the circumstances, I could not help myself, the only alternative being to keep them at the Immigration Home. That would have been a very bad advertisement for the State. I am pleased to say the settlers have taken kindly to their new life, but it was not fair that they should be sent there. Many of these settlers have gone to Northcliffe, and some to Busselton. I have been endeavouring to find out what the position is for the future. A number of blocks have been surveyed already. I will give the details of the land suitable for group settlement within 19 or 14 miles of a railway. At Northcliffe there are 551 blocks. These are mostly affected by drainage and distance from a railway; that is to say, they are not suitable unless they are properly drained and are given a railway within easy reach of them. Northcliffe is 25 miles from the Pemberton railway, and the cost of living there is very high. The people are complaining that they cannot, on the sustenance allowed, pay the cost of

living. There is no chance of giving them a railway for the next two years. To the west of Denmark there are 338 blocks, comprised mostly of bottle brush and bog myrtle flat country. When I reached Denmark a little while ago I found that some of the groups were very much scattered, particularly Nos. 113, 114 and 116. The last group to go out was ten miles from the other. I asked the reason, when there was so much vacant land close to Denmark. I was informed that the group settlement officer did not think the land was suitable for groups. I instructed the experts of the department to make a further classification of the land, and see whether or not it was suitable. There are these 338 blocks in close proximity to the proposed railway, and I did not think it fair to reject the land on the word of one officer. Of course, we must be careful lest we put men on land that is not suitable. At Diamond Tree Gully, Manjimup, there are 30 blocks available, but these have been refused by the Forests Department. At Chanybearup, near Pemberton, there are 40 blocks which have also been refused by the Forests Department. At Collie River there are some blocks, but these have been rejected by the Surveyor General as unsuitable. There has been an agitation for group settlement at Greenbushes, and the blocks there are now under investigation by the Surveyor General. They have, however, been refused by the Forests Department, who say the areas are wanted for the timber. On the Busselton-Margaret River area there is a locality that has been reported on by Surveyor Terry. It comprises between 10,000 and 12,000 acres. It has, however, not been submitted. The surveyor found that it was from six to fourteen miles from the new railway. There will, however, be a further classification to ascertain what the value of the land is for group settlement. There is a proposal to have a settlement on Scott River, east of Augusta, but the report is that the land is inaccessible. At Nannup there are 60 blocks that have not yet been submitted, although the surveys are in hand. On the Peel estate 15 blocks are now being surveyed. These are part of the repurchased estate, and there is a small area that requires to be drained. On the Pickering estate there are 20 blocks that have not yet been submitted. This shows that we have only 90 blocks at present available for additional groups. That is the position regarding land available, as it has been placed before me by the departmental officers. This will enable hon. members to realise some of the difficulties that we have to contend with regarding group settlement. It will be seen that we have been pushing ahead a little too fast. In my opinion, and in the opinion of the officers of the department, we could buy land, ringbark it, and partially clear holdings in areas adjacent to roads, more advantageously and at less cost

than we can settle migrants in the more distant parts of the South-West.

Mr. Thomson: Hear, hear! That has been put up to the Government from time to time.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But if we buy land, we must, in accordance with the agreement with the British Government, give it to the migrants free.

Mr. Thomson: It would pay you to do so in some instances.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But we cannot carry on under those conditions!

The Premier: The agreement must be varied. If that were done, we could buy the land and let settlers have it at half what it is costing now.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: As Sir James Mitchell has told the House on several occasions, he had an undertaking from the British Government that if any subsequent agreement were made with an Australian State, the provisions of which represented an improvement on our own agreement, those improved conditions would also be embodied in the Western Australian agreement. In February of this year Sir James was notified by the Agent General that our agreement would be brought into line with that entered into with the Victorian Government. Under that document Victoria had to settle 2,000 people and was allowed to borrow £3,000,000 for that purpose, but they could get assistance from the British and Commonwealth Governments to the extent of only £2,000,000. Provision was also made for the British Government to bear any losses incurred during a certain number of years. The extent of that provision depended upon the number of years the migrants had been on the land, and the amount provided for, diminished the longer the settler remained there. After a certain period no risk was involved. The New South Wales agreement was not quite so good. That State, however, was allowed to buy land and charge the migrant for it over a period of 30 years. On the other hand, under the Western Australian agreement the land has to be given free to the migrant. In February a promise was given that our agreement would be modified in accordance with the promise made to Sir James Mitchell but to date we have received no draft of the modification. We have been assured that the British Government agreed to the modification of our agreement, but for the present it was not regarded as necessary to prepare the modified agreement owing to the fact that the Commonwealth Government had entered into a further agreement which would cancel all previous ones with the States. Recently the Premier saw the Federal Honorary Minister, Senator Wilson, when he was passing through Perth. The Premier got some idea of the Commonwealth agreement, but I am completely in the dark as to its provisions. The Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. J. H. Thomas, has sent out a despatch relating to the position and he in-

cluded a copy of the official report of the "Parliamentary Debates" in the House of Commons on the 28th May of this year. Mr. Lunn, the Secretary of the Department of Overseas Trade, who is also chairman of the Overseas Development Committee, made a statement as to what has taken place regarding the proposed Commonwealth scheme. So far as I can judge—the new scheme may not be fully set out in the speech—we will not be a great deal better off under the new scheme than we are now, apart from the fact that payments of interest will be made over a longer period. In the course of his remarks Mr. Lunn said—

The present Government accepted the resolution of the Economic Conference and will continue to give effect by administrative action to the policy of overseas settlement as embodied in the Empire Settlement Act. I have gone into the schemes since I became chairman and I have discussed them with the Australian representatives. There is no doubt that comparatively slow progress of land settlement schemes arranged with various States is due to the financial basis of one-third of the interest on their loans for five years and the necessity for migrants to have capital. After discussing the whole question of settlement development in Australia with Mr. Theodore, the Premier of Queensland, and later with Senator Wilson, the Commonwealth Minister for Immigration, we have offered, with the concurrence of the Treasury, to pay one-half of the interest for a period of five years on loans not exceeding 20 million pounds, in addition to the loans which may be raised in the Commonwealth under existing schemes, together with one-third of the interest for a further period of five years. It is contemplated that these loans will be raised in instalments over a period of 10 years. It is stipulated that for each £1,000 of loan money the Australian Government should undertake to settle at least one family, without capital, averaging five persons, together with five other assisted immigrants, men, women and children, the Commonwealth Government to undertake to reorganise and place on a proper basis the existing arrangements for the reception, training, settlement, after-care and housing of the new settlers, under Government supervision.

Mr. Thomson: You will have no hope of doing that in the South-West at present.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is the statement made by the Secretary for the Department of Overseas Trade respecting the new agreement.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: Are we giving away our sovereign rights to the Commonwealth Government?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Mitchell Government handed over migration to the Commonwealth Government. At any

rate, Mr. Lunn replied on behalf of the Imperial Government and if his outline gives the effect of the agreement, we shall be scarcely any better off than we are now. We are allowed £1,000 for each assisted settler without capital and for that we have to bring in nine or ten additional persons as well. We know that each settler will cost us about £1,700, on top of which provision has to be made for the construction of roads and railways, and other conveniences necessary for land settlement purposes. The financial position, therefore, is one that every hon. member should weigh carefully. The Premier has already informed the House that we shall require £1,250,000 in order to carry on group settlements this year. Next year more money will be required.

The Premier: Probably £750,000 more.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The result is that we shall be about four million pounds short in settling the 6,000 people in this part of the State and another two or three millions short on account of expenses involved in connection with the provision of transport facilities and other conveniences required for the group settlers. It will be necessary, therefore, for the State to provide an additional £7,000,000 to the £6,000,000 obtained under the agreement.

The Premier: The Pemberton-Denmark railway will cost about a million pounds.

Mr. Thomson: I think we had better send the Premier Home!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: However, I am in the dark regarding the Commonwealth agreement. I have no desire to stop immigration but I cannot at present agree to the request made by the Agent General that he should send people out as group settlers until I know what the position will be under the new agreement.

Mr. Thomson: Quite right.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We must know where we stand. Once we send migrants out to settle on the land to become dairy farmers, I want to be in such a position that a Minister following me in charge of the Lands Department will know where the necessary money is coming from.

Mr. Thomson: We should concentrate in getting the Victorian agreement applied to Western Australia instead of adopting the one you refer to.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But we were not consulted regarding that one at all.

The Premier: We were not consulted at all in connection with the Commonwealth agreement negotiated by Senator Wilson. We do not know anything about it yet.

Mr. Richardson: But does that not follow automatically upon the other agreements?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: This shows that from a financial point of view everything in the garden is not lovely. I

do not know whether I am a Jonah, but unfortunately I seem always to be connected with some form of Government activity that has to be cleared up. We can only hope for the best and I believe that members on both sides of the Chamber, and the people generally, have but the one desire, and that is to carry out the engagement they have entered into on behalf of group settlers. I believe, too, that hon. members and the public expect the Minister in charge for the time being to see that the migrants are settled satisfactorily and that every endeavour is made to ensure success. That is how it appeals to me. There is one other matter to which I desire to allude. The member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson), when speaking the other night, referred to a previous group settlement he said had taken place in Western Australia. Unfortunately he was under a misapprehension. There were no group settlements in Western Australia prior to those entered into under the State's agreement with the Imperial authority. Some years ago the Government purchased land at Denmark. There were many unemployed and the Government sent the men down to Denmark to clear the land that had been purchased. It was cleared but was not taken up as holdings. The result was that when, later on, the land was taken up and used for group settlement purposes, the cost of clearing the land dealt with at that time was, owing to the regrowth, nearly as great as the cost of clearing virgin country there. That was an entirely different proposition from the present group settlement scheme. Further, there is a misapprehension in regard to the sourness of the country. In the first season after clearing, the land has grown splendid crops of potatoes and pasture. Some of the best potatoes ever grown in the State have been produced on group lands cleared and then planted straight away. There has been no sourness to affect the growing of crops on that land. But the officers agree with the member for Guildford that land could be brought into cultivation much cheaper if it were ring-barked beforehand. During last year, in order to avail themselves of that system of clearing, the group officers ring-barked over 1,000 acres. They realise that much the cheaper clearing process would be to ringbark the land before the ordinary land clearer gets on to it. But if settlers are put on the groups as has been done recently, there is no time for ringbarking. Frequently the settlers went on the land before the group was ready for them. Then the land had to be cleared immediately for use, and ringbarking was out of the question. I hope we shall be able to make such alterations as to prevent people being brought into Western Australia before we have proper locations to place them on. I would even like to see houses erected before settlers go on the groups. However, that is not practicable at present because

the areas have to be cleared before the houses are erected. But I have no doubt there will be great improvements with greater perseverance and closer attention by the group settlers themselves. Some of them do not feel that they are working for themselves, but consider they are working for wages. Consequently the success that is desirable is not likely to be attained with men of that description. Undoubtedly Western Australia has for some time been offering and is to-day offering in point of land settlement one of the best propositions that has ever been put forward in the world. Nowhere else can the settler obtain the same advantages as in Western Australia, and we expect a return from the money expended. The member for Perth pointed out recently that the time and money for completing a group ought not to be exceeded. The experience which has been gained shows that the establishment of a group settler will cost £1,700 in timber country, and £1,600 on light land. The area of land cleared is estimated to cost £25 per acre. No 1 group was started on the 28th March, 1921, and the cost to the 30th June this year amounted to £24,432 11s. 4d., and the group is expected to be completed in June, 1926. The corresponding data for group No. 2R, the 1st May, 1921, £23,871 19s. 6d., March of 1926; group No. 3, 31st May, 1921, £25,167 12s. 4d., 1st May, 1925; group No. 4, 4th July, 1921, £22,193 18s. 1d., 1st May, 1925; group No. 5, 14th September, 1921, £21,975 11s. 10d., 30th June, 1925; group No. 6, £23,665 0s. 8d., 1st May, 1925; group No. 7, 17th January, 1922, £25,554 3s., 1st May, 1925; group No. 8, 15th November, 1921, £23,777 5s. 11d., July of 1926. After that, with the exception of one group, the cost dropped considerably. The groups I have quoted were the first groups started. One group which was started on the 17th July, 1922, cost to 30th June last £16,618 13s. 9d., and is not expected to be completed until July of 1928.

The Premier: Six years.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There might be a mistake in the estimate.

The Premier: The other groups are nearly all expected to take five years.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: When the member for Perth spoke in the manner he did the other night, it was apparent that he did not know the exact position. Heavy expenditure was incurred on the first lot of groups, but the cost has been much less since then. Group No. 32 started on the 2nd October, 1922, and is expected to be completed on the 1st September, 1924. When I was on that group recently, it was expected to be completed within a week. There are houses on the settlement, but no cattle and no plant, and nothing has been provided for the settler to make a living for himself in the meantime. There is no pasture as yet. On group 32 all clearing has been done, but there has been no advance sowing of pasture. Groups 14, 15 and 16 were in a similar position, but the set-

tlers were given sufficient work, still on the 10s. a day, in the way of clearing until such time as they got cattle.

Mr. Latham: How long do the officers estimate it will be before the pasture is available?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: October of this year. It is considered that by far the better course would be to get hold of the burr of the subterranean clover this year than to put cattle on the clover. The amount paid last year for seed was much greater than the value of the clover as feed for cattle. On some of the blocks in group No. 32 there is no seed sown yet for dairy purposes. As regards the complete scheme of group settlement, it is estimated that to settle 6,000 people Western Australia must borrow seven millions sterling over and above the £6,000,000 provided. That additional amount will provide the funds needed to carry on the group work. As regards the Agricultural Bank and Soldier Settlement and the Industries Assistance Board, the financial position is such that I ask more particularly those representing the farmers' interests to try to assist the board, who do their best for the settlers and take extreme measures only against such men as have not carried out their work in accordance with the board's requirements. Group settlement, the Agricultural Bank, and soldier settlement would absorb all the money the Government could raise during the next 12 months. I hope every member of the Chamber will give the matter due consideration and realise the difficulties the officers have to contend with.

On motion by Mr. Barnard, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.41 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 13th August, 1924.

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

QUESTION—STATE STEAMERS, NORTHERN RUN.

Hon. G. W. MILES asked the Colonial Secretary: In view of the loss now being incurred by the State steamships in running a two-monthly service from Fremantle to Darwin, will the Government consider the question of discontinuing this service and substituting a monthly service from Fremantle to Wyndham?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: In view of the agreement between the State Government and the Federal Government and the increased subsidy lately obtained from the Federal Government, it is not considered desirable to alter existing conditions of running the s.s. "Bambra." When considering reorganisation of the State Shipping Service the point raised of an increased service to Wyndham will be considered.

QUESTION—RAILWAY TRANSIT, DELAYS.

Hon. G. W. MILES asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Is it a fact that Truck No. 051, containing explosives, which left Perth on Monday, 4th August, is still in transit to Meekatharra? 2, If so, is this due to some of the railway employees working 44 hours instead of 48? 3, Do the Government realise the seriousness to the mining industry of such delay?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, Truck left Perth on night of 4th August and arrived at Meekatharra this morning. Owing to an error of judgment truck was delayed two days at Buntine. 2, No. 3, Yes, and action has been taken accordingly.

QUESTIONS (2)—MINING.

South African Conditions, Report.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Has the Government mining representative who was recently appointed and proceeded to South Africa to inquire into the ventilation, sanitation, and working conditions of the gold mines, submitted a report? 2, If so, when will it be available to members?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1 and 2, The report has been received and is being prepared for publication as early as possible.

Occupational Diseases.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS asked the Colonial Secretary: What action, if any, does the Government intend taking to enact a satisfactory law in regard to miners' occupational disease, including fibrosis, silicosis, and other forms of dust disease except phthisis and tuberculosis?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: The policy of the Government in the matter will be disclosed in Bills to be introduced during the session.