

obstacles in the way of those who are trying their best to get rid of this scourge. If the alterations proposed are not satisfactory it will not be long before Parliament meets again, and further amendments can be introduced. But the great point is to deal with this matter efficaciously. It is no use surrounding it with sentiment. If it were any other disease such as smallpox, there would be no trouble.

Progress reported.

## Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 6th March, 1918.

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

[For "Questions on Notice" and "Papers Presented," see "Votes and Proceedings."]

### BILLS (6)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Land Act Amendment.  
Introduced by the Premier.
- 2, Dividend Duties Act Amendment.
- 3, General Loan and Inscribed Stock Amendment.
- 4, Stamp Act Amendment.
- 5, Totalisator Duty Act Amendment.
- 6, Treasury Bonds Deficiency Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Colonial Treasurer.

### BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT. Council's Amendment.

Amendment made by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; the Attorney General in charge of the Bill.

New Clause—Add the following clause, to stand as No. 6:—

Disorderly behaviour at meeting. (See Com.,

No. 17 of 1911, Section 182e.)

6. A section is inserted in the principal Act as follows:—

188b. (1.) Any person who, at any public meeting to which this section applies, acts in a disorderly manner for the purpose of preventing the transaction of the business for which the meeting is held shall be guilty of an offence against this Act. Penalty—Five pounds or one month's imprisonment. (2.) This section applies to any lawful public political meeting held in relation to any election of members of Parliament between the date of the issue of the writ for the election and the date of the return of the writ.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: At present we have no provision precisely on the lines of the proposed new clause, which has been taken from the Commonwealth Act. Under our existing law, if any disorderly conduct takes place at a public meeting redress can only be had under the Police Act. The proposed new clause would bring our law into line with the Commonwealth law. I do not know that there is any particular need for it, because within my recollection there have been one or two prosecutions for disorderly conduct at public political meetings. In one case arising at Guildford the magistrate sent the offender to gaol for seven days. Our Police Act deals with disorderly conduct in a public place, whereas the proposed new clause narrows down the offence to disorderly behaviour at a lawful public political meeting. I do not know that I would suggest the clause if I had to redraft the Bill again,

### BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Message received notifying that the Assembly had disagreed with the amendment made by the Council.

### BILL—CURATOR OF INTESTATE ESTATES.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 27th February; Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair, the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 20, 21—agreed to.

Clause 22—Curator to keep accounts:

Hon. A. SANDERSON: This is a legal Bill which I have not read. It seems a matter of some importance, but I will accept unreservedly the assurance of the Minister that it is all right, and that there are no contentious clauses in it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I explained the provisions of the Bill three weeks ago. It has been on the Notice Paper ever since. It was discussed in Committee up to a certain stage and a point was raised in connection with one clause, and the debate adjourned to enable a member to look into it. The Bill is now under discussion in Committee for the second time.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 23 to 30—agreed to.

Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment.

Recommittal.

On motion by the COLONIAL SECRETARY, Bill recommitted for the further consideration of Clause 3.

Clause 3—Interpretation:

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

"That in line 1 of the interpretation of 'Distribute' after 'pay' the word 'deliver' be inserted."

This amendment is made at the suggestion of the Crown Solicitor, who points out that when there is only one person, the estate cannot be divided. It is therefore necessary that the word "deliver" should be inserted.

Amendment put and passed, the clause as amended agreed to.

Bill again reported with an amendment.

House adjourned at 8.54 p.m.

but it comes to us from another place where it has had due consideration.

Mr. Munsie: They must be anticipating some trouble at the forthcoming Council elections.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I certainly see no harm in the proposed new clause. It may be said for it that it will bring the definite provision into the one statute. For these reasons I move—

“That the amendment be agreed to.”

Hon. T. WALKER: The Attorney General practically tells us that the amendment is of no value, adds nothing to our laws, and gives no greater security. As a matter of fact I object to this constant multiplication of so-called safeguards. I do not think these provisions should be distributed all through our statutes instead of being dealt with in one law. Again, the clause as it stands is altogether too vague. What is a lawful public political meeting? A meeting for the advocacy of advanced views may be construed by some into an unlawful public meeting. We have repeatedly seen that in the past. At one time the advocacy of trades unionism or of arbitration for the settlement of strikes was scarcely regarded as being altogether lawful. We are here asked to make a distinction between the meetings which are regular under the old order, and meetings which are right ahead of views entertained by the majority. I cannot support the amendment until we have a definition of what is a lawful public political meeting. Again, I want to know what is meant by “disorderly.” I have heard meetings interrupted for the space of many minutes by wild, hysterical cheering and shouting in approval of something that has been said. Yet that has not been held to be disorderly. If one can show approval by noises without being disorderly, surely others also are entitled to show disapproval by noises? Yet the showing of disapproval in noisy fashion might be considered unlawful, and under the proposed new clause it would then entail a heavy penalty. The proposed new clause leaves it to a magistrate at all times to decide against a man who disapproves of the proceedings at a meeting. I do not desire to place in the hands of a magistrate the power of determining what is sane and healthy in public opinion, because the majority of people under excitement may be wrong in the attitude which they adopt. Big crowds can become so mad that they will give the sane and real thinkers of the community no chance of expressing their views. This legislation makes it possible for anyone to have a man given over to the police. What is the need of making special regulations to deal with election time? All meetings ought to be conducted openly and freely, and everyone should have the right of free speech. There ought to be no difference between the two classes of meetings. It is true there is some excitement at election time which does not always exist at other times, but we ought to have more excitement then and we ought not to curb it so long as it does not terminate in physical violence. If people attending meetings confine themselves in their expressions of opinion to vocal utterances, I see no harm in a little more warmth being allowed at election time than at other times.

Mr. Smith: Do you believe in an organised gang going to a meeting for the purpose of preventing the speaker from being heard?

Hon. T. WALKER: Does not the hon. member ask his friends and supporters to go to his political meetings? If so, surely, as it is a public meeting, the other side can ask those who are united in opposition to attend.

Mr. Smith: Do you approve of an organised gang going to meetings to prevent the speaker from making his remarks?

Hon. T. WALKER: This does not touch on that at all.

Mr. Smith: It does.

Hon. T. WALKER: A gang cannot be arrested.

Mr. Smith: You can arrest the members of the gang.

Hon. T. WALKER: This deals only with the individual. An individual has a right to express his disapproval as much as any other individual has a right to express his approval. It is childish to be afraid of public opinion.

Mr. Foley: There were men in this State who were afraid of public opinion during the last conscription campaign.

Hon. T. WALKER: There always are men who are afraid of public opinion. My contention is that we ought to allow public sentiment to take care of itself, and not treat the members of the public as children. We must not make the police the arbiters of our morals even in that respect. We want a healthier spirit amongst our people, but we cannot get that by police laws.

Mr. Smith: We want everyone to have a chance of being heard.

Hon. T. WALKER: Undoubtedly. That can only be done by cultivation of these sentiments amongst the people, and this cannot be done by police laws. By petty persecutions we can embitter a certain section of the community and make our meetings more violent in consequence. Good sense, good taste, and good treatment of public opinion is the way to cure the evil referred to by the member for North Perth. It is already curing itself. There were times when we had these police laws in full force, and anyone who opened his mouth in public, either on the platform or in a public place, was watched by the police and had notes taken of his remarks, and possibly a prosecution followed. The moment these laws became more or less obsolete, we had a chance of debate and the public an opportunity of expressing their views without any serious interference whatsoever. Had it not been for the extremely exciting incident of recent date, there would have been no legislation of this kind.

Mr. Smith: Disorder at meetings has been on the increase.

Hon. T. WALKER: Not when the hon. member takes into consideration the great provocation there was, and the fact that the headquarters of the Commonwealth issued instructions that men were to be run in who had committed no offence, and placed on their trial for charges on which they were cleared when the election was over. When one considers all the provocation of recent date one must admit that the public

have been exceedingly calm. The people have shown a good temper, which is to their eternal credit. To make the censor a judge of public opinion and to have him eternally watching our public meetings to see what is going on is beneath the dignity of a civilised nation. It is not to be expected that he can exercise proper discretion. This puts people's minds and hearts against existing institutions, and has a tendency to make them disloyal and to set them against existing orders. I cannot therefore approve of this provision in our legislation. We have the matter covered already by our laws on our Statute-book. It is time we set our faces against this everlasting shaking of fists at the community and this attempt to intimidate and humiliate the people. No people in the world have such a sense of fairplay than those of Western Australia. Leave them to that sense of fair play without calling in the police and having these absurd regulations.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I wish to read Section 54 of the Police Act of 1892 which governs the offence as it exists now—

Every person who shall be guilty of any disorderly conduct on any street, public place, or in any passenger boat or vehicle, any police station or lock-up, shall, on conviction, be liable to a penalty of not more than Ten pounds for every such offence, or to imprisonment, with or without hard labour, for any term not exceeding six calendar months, or to both fine and imprisonment.

This offence would come within this section as disorderly conduct within a public place, and punishments have been made under that section already. The clause proposed here simply narrows the matter down.

Mr. MULLANY: I intend to oppose the inclusion of a clause such as this in the Electoral Act, for the reason that I believe the Electoral Act should deal solely with the machinery for filling positions in the Parliament of Western Australia. If sufficient power does not exist under the Police Act to prevent individuals, or organising gangs from attempting to interrupt a speaker at political meetings then the Act should be amended to provide for that. Such an amendment as this should not be allowed to appear in the Electoral Act. Hon. members will see from the wording of the clauses that they apply only to Parliamentary election meetings held within the State. This clause would not apply to a meeting held in connection with a conscription referendum. If there is sufficient machinery in existence to-day to deal with important public matters outside Parliamentary elections, where is the necessity for bringing into the Electoral Act provisions for the punishment of persons endeavouring to break up political meetings? We shall be establishing a dangerous precedent if we put into the Electoral Act what should appear in the Police Act. If we have not sufficient power under the Police Act then that is the Act which should be amended. Nothing has taken place at elections to jus-

tify us in including the proposed drastic powers in this Bill. I am going to oppose the amendment and I hope hon. members will see the danger of permitting such a clause to remain.

Mr. PILKINGTON: I do not quite understand why this clause has been suggested by another place. If anything of this kind is to be regarded as an offence at a political meeting, then it should be regarded as an offence at any meeting. It would be a disastrous thing to suggest that we must make something an offence at a political meeting which would not be an offence at any other meeting. It seems to me most important that the liberty of those who attend a meeting to express themselves as clearly and vigorously as possible should be preserved, and this should be the case particularly at political meetings. The clause appears to me to be a most strange one and I shall certainly vote against it.

Mr. PICKERING: Is there any provision in the Police Act which permits of the removal of disorderly persons from public meetings? Last Friday I attended a land tax meeting and I saw a man removed merely because he asked a question.

The PREMIER: I do not know why the Electoral Act should be chosen for an amendment such as that proposed by the Legislative Council. I do not know that there is any more likelihood to be disorderly conduct at electoral meetings than any other meetings. Already provision exists in the Police Act for dealing with persons who do not behave themselves at meetings and the penalty in the Police Act is greater than that which the Legislative Council propose to provide in this suggested clause. I do not see that there is any need for the insertion of this amendment and it is certainly not warranted by reason of any disorder which has taken place at our election meetings. So far as I know they have always been carried out in a most orderly manner.

Question put and negatived; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

Resolution reported, and the report adopted.

A committee consisting of the Attorney General, Hon. T. Walker and Mr. Mullany drew up reasons for not agreeing to the amendment.

Reasons adopted, and a Message accordingly returned to the Council.

## ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1917-18.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the previous day; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair.

Lands Department, Hon. H. B. Lefroy, Minister; the Honorary Minister (Hon. F. E. S. Willmott) in charge of the votes.

Vote—Lands and Surveys, £46,131:

Hon. T. WALKER (Kanowna) [5.33]: I am not going to detain the Committee long, but I want to make two protests. First of all I am not satisfied with the Lands Department being under what I may call divided control. However much the Honorary Minister and the

Premier are in agreement, in the administration of the office, one has to take the responsibility for what the other does. It is more or less outside the functions of constitutional government, to have a responsible Minister holding a portfolio and another Minister in an honorary character, performing all the work, or the bulk at least; the real Minister who holds the portfolio of Lands being more or less a rubber stamp, giving the signature where the Statute requires it, but in all other respects leaving the administration of the Lands Department to the Honorary Minister. I do not think this is altogether satisfactory, more particularly when we know one of the Ministers is of rather an erratic disposition—I say it with all respect. He is one of those who governs his intellect by his feelings and his brain is secondary to his emotions. That is a wrong method of guidance in important departments of State like the Lands.

Mr. Thomson: This is pouring oil on troubled waters.

Hon. T. WALKER: I do not know many more important departments than the Lands. The whole future of the State has to depend on the management of our great public territory. It is very easy not only to formulate a wrong policy, but to so wrongly administer it, that land settlement becomes a farce. It is quite possible that mal-administration in this public asset will drive people off the land instead of inviting them to settle, and if ever there was a time when we needed cool heads and extensive brain capacity, it is now, for never was there such a trying period in the Lands administration. A great area has been practically left without any settlers at all from the fact that men have gone to the war and their farms have been thrown into the hands of the Agricultural Bank. We need some keen brain to see how the full consequences of that may be avoided or repaired, and I estimate, if we have two Ministers, neither of them giving as it were their complete attention to the matter, one relying more or less on the other, we cannot have that carefulness of action and a well-defined policy. Moreover, we are on the eve of having to do more, or trying to do more, with our lands than any past history has given us occasion for. We will have by and by not only our own soldiers who have left the land, but others who have left other employment find their former employment closed to them, on their return, seeking to settle on the land, and we have given a general idea to all those who are fighting, that if we cannot do anything else for returned soldiers we can at least settle them on the land. We want more than an Honorary Minister giving attention to a matter of this kind. We want a strong man in that department devoting his whole time to it and taking the full responsibility for it, otherwise we are going to have dissatisfaction of a strong character. When our soldiers come back—and it is not only our soldiers, but if the people of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales have their way we shall have a flood of immigrants here seeking land—the returned soldiers of these places will have their usual avenues of employment cut off from them.

Their tastes will have been altered in consequence of what they have passed through in the terrible ordeal in which they are now engaged, and they will seek for new homes and new ventures and doubtless we shall have to make provision for a large number of them who will come here. What has been done? What has been accomplished? We have it now presented to the Assembly that the lands of the State can pretty well be neglected and ignored. The responsible Minister can attend to other functions and duties and a sort of shadow brought in to do the work which is not satisfactory. I enter my protest against a system of management of that part of our State which is to build the future of Western Australia. I have one other protest to make and that is against the method of the appointment of Mr. King. I have not a word to say against Mr. King personally. I have known him for years and I know him to be a capable and energetic public servant, but I want to know how he came to get his dual position of Surveyor General and Under Secretary for Lands, not against all comers because they were kept out of it, they were not allowed to make application for the position, but the position was filled practically in secret. I want to know what influence had Mr. King that he was able to get his own terms as to salary and an exalted position, to the deprivation of others who were applicants for the position. What sinister or other influence was there at work? Had Mr. King friends in the Government? Was it a friendly act, or was it an obligation for some past service, or had he wormed himself into the affections of members of the Ministry, or were there even closer ties than that? Was there any position of blood relationship? I think the Committee should know what were the motives that moved so suddenly, without time for rivals to come into the field, without any chance of others making application, what motives led the Government to this suddenness and to this favouritism, for it cannot appear in any other light? We have passed a Public Service Act for the purpose of preventing favouritism, to destroy the possibility of nepotism. The Public Service Act was passed to prevent undue favouritism and undue influence in the attainment of employment of an exalted and important character, and in that respect and perhaps only in that respect is the Public Service Act important, but the Public Service Act has been ignored in this instance, it has been violated. The public service has a strong grievance. In connection with every other appointment notice must, by the regulations, be given to the public service. We have to see what men in the public service are available, and we have to give to all available a chance of applying. These regulations have the force of law. I am obliged to say that this appointment has the appearance of an actual violation of the law of the land.

The Premier: Will the hon. gentleman say how it is a violation of the law?

Hon. T. WALKER: By the omission to advertise and call for applications. I know that sometimes the Public Service Commissioner may strain a point.

The Premier: Does the hon. gentleman mean to say that the Public Service Commissioner violated the law?

Hon. T. WALKER: I say that by the failure to call for applications for this post, the law was violated, undoubtedly.

The Premier: Will the hon. gentleman point that out by a reference to the Public Service Act?

Hon. T. WALKER: It is the regulations which provide for notification of the vacancy of any post, and for advertising such vacancy, and allowing time so that everyone fitted for the post, or considering himself eligible for the post, may apply. It is in that respect I consider the law has been violated. And I want to know, why? The member for Guildford interjected something to the effect, "Was not Mr. King the best man?" I am not in a position to judge of that.

Mr. Davies: But the Public Service Commissioner is.

Hon. T. WALKER: Not necessarily. I submit that there were other men entitled to that post, and quite qualified to fill it. There were men who could have applied for the Surveyor Generalship, men fully entitled to it by years of service, men whose fitness for the post cannot be doubted. There were men who had served under Mr. Clifton in the Lands Department and were fully entitled to the Under Secretaryship of that department. What motives were behind the Government incidentally when, without advertisement, without information to the public service generally, these two positions were combined and Mr. King got the dual position at precisely the salary he asked for? I want to know how these coincidences occurred, and what motives were behind them? It is idle to say there were not men fit for either one or the other position; and I question very much whether, when everything is considered, we have saved money by making the dual appointment; whether it would not have been more economical to take the usual course and appoint a Surveyor General whose fitness could not be doubted and also an Under Secretary for Lands whose fitness could not be doubted. It is an injustice that those men, whose years of loyal service—as so ably pointed out last night by the member for North-East Fremantle—entitled them to fair and just treatment, should in this manner be deprived of what may be considered their rights—rights which they obtained when entering the service, and which they have strengthened by faithful performance of duty. That is not the way to get good service. It is a return to the old days before the Public Service Act. It is ignoring and putting aside that Act. If the Act is to be disregarded, let us do it openly and frankly; let the Government come down with the necessary Bill and ask Parliament to repeal the Public Service Act. But what right have the Government to treat the Public Service Act as a perfect nullity, simply because there is someone applying for a place at a certain salary who is not only well known to, but in some way has become ingratiated into the bosom of, certain members or all the members of the Ministry?

The Minister for Mines: Do you suggest Mr. King is a blood relation to all the members of the Ministry?

Hon. T. WALKER: No. I do not see how he could be.

The Minister for Mines: I did not know how far you were going.

Hon. T. WALKER: But is there any blood relationship? I want to know that. It is a phenomenon when such things can happen in this age, an age in which we pride ourselves on government according to law, and in accordance with precedent, and with a strict sense of honour and responsibility.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam) [5.52]: I am very pleased indeed to observe that hon. members opposite realise that from the land must come our future prosperity. I have been hopeful for the past 18 months that some activity would be displayed in preparation for the time when men will come to settle on our lands. The Ministry know that we have repatriation to attend to, and that we shall have, in any case, a considerable number of men desirous of going on the land. The last speaker pointed out that there is nothing for them to do but go upon the land. In the not very distant future some of the suburbs around Perth will be more or less deserted, because there will not be work to keep the people in the metropolitan area. History will repeat itself. Just as in Melbourne, a decade or two ago, people were forced into the country to get what work they could, so the same state of affairs will obtain here. We should be prepared for it when it does come. Personally, I shall welcome the time when people leave the cities to go upon the land. Repatriation is our responsibility: the honour of the State is bound up in this work. I wish to see the question made a broad question. I desire that a sufficient number of blocks of first-class land—Government land as far as possible—should be made available. My opinion is that we shall get immigrants in large numbers from the Old Country. The people of the Old Country have made it quite clear to us that they are willing to emigrate to this State; and I know the Wilson Government made it clear to the people of the Old Country that we would welcome them with both hands and be fully prepared to receive them. I daresay the present Government have repeated that intimation, though I do not know it. Now, what is the use, unless we are prepared, of allowing these people to come here? We know that when the tide sets this way—just as it did in Canada—we must be ready. In Canada settlement hung fire for 20 years, just as it has done in this State; and just as the tide of immigration eventually flowed to Canada, it will flow into Western Australia. Unless we are prepared, we shall have difficulty in coping with the influx of people. Some of our country is difficult to survey, and difficult to supply with roads and railways. Those are not things to be done in a hurry. For instance, we cannot have surveys done in the South-West during winter. The work, however, must be carried out. Whatever land is available near the railways, close to the city of Perth, or about the hills repre-

sented by the member for Swan, should be cut up as speedily as possible. Some expense will have to be faced in that connection, but the amount will appear on the Estimates. The appointment of Mr. King to the dual position of Under Secretary for Lands and Surveyor General has been discussed this afternoon. First of all, I desire to protest against the amalgamation of the two offices. The dual position is not workable. It was tried in South Australia and, I understand, did not work well. If the present were all we had to consider, then half a dozen appointments could be rolled into one without any danger to the State. But the present condition of affairs will not last. I hope the Minister for Lands intends to become active in land settlement extending from the Kimberleys to the South-West. The whole work of settling and developing our broad acres is on the Minister and his department, and the Surveyor General is the man who will have to do the greater portion of the work. I have pointed out more than once in this Chamber that surveys must precede settlement and production. And the surveyors must work under the Surveyor General. His is a very big job indeed. Notice has been given to-day of the introduction of a Bill dealing with pastoral leaseholds. Under the Act which we are asked to amend, the Surveyor General must be a member of the board to fix the rents.

Member: He must be the chairman.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It is a most important task, because even in the North our lands vary, and the rents are to be appraised for the next 30 years.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Fifteen years.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: No; 30 years, because under the Act rents can only be raised to the extent of 50 per cent. at the end of 15 years. Therefore the appraisement will be for 30 years. That is too important a matter, I think, to be entrusted to a man who will be overloaded with administrative details. In such circumstances it cannot, I consider, be done to satisfaction. The Under Secretary for Lands deals with a great many matters and troubles extending over a good many years. I suppose the Lands Department holds 60,000 leases current. Each of these leases means work, quite apart from other detail work connected with the business of the department. That business is a very big one, and I venture to say that Mr. King will be mainly engaged on work which could be done, and ought to be done, by an under secretary. The member for Kanowna has referred to the method of the appointment. It was, at any rate, unfortunate, but I do not think it was illegal. I believe that under the Act the Public Service Commissioner can appoint without advertising positions; but, still, I think the procedure adopted was unfortunate, because the first position advertised was to carry a salary of £600. The applicants for that position knew they were applying for a vacancy carrying that salary. Mr. King, very wisely, I think—and quite justifiably, I think, too—said, "I am perfectly willing to take the position at

£804." Mr. King apparently got the dual position at £804 without the other applicants for the previous position, at the smaller salary, being notified. The happening is, undoubtedly, unfortunate, and one which members may rightly protest against. If the vacancy was to be altered from one of £600 per annum to one of £804, then all applicants should have had an opportunity of knowing it. But the point I do not understand is what considerations induced the Minister to decide in two or three days upon a dual appointment. Before causing to be advertised the vacancy of Surveyor General, he must have thought the matter out, and must have determined in his own mind—at least I hope he did—that the one position would not work. Having determined that he would have a combined Surveyor General and Under Secretary for Lands, some explanation was needed for the change of front in that short space of three days. The happening is most unfortunate because men like Mr. Canning and Mr. Camm, as well as other surveyors, have done yeoman service to the Lands Department during a time which was a very busy one indeed—during the last ten or 15 years—and their claims should not be passed over lightly. I have nothing at all to say against Mr. King. I know he is a very excellent officer. Since the member for Kanowna has asked how it is that Mr. King has found his way into the hearts of the present Ministry, let me say that there never was a Minister since I have been in Parliament who did not approve of Mr. King and hold him in the greatest esteem.

Hon. T. Walker: But not to the extent of sacrificing the law.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: But that is the position. All those Ministers have recognised that Mr. King has done very good work. When, some time ago, it was necessary to lend assistance to the Public Service Commissioner Mr. King, and an Under Secretary for Lands, that is beside the mark. If the dual appointment does not work we shall have to appoint a Surveyor General, who will probably be Mr. King, and an Under Secretary for Lands, and so there will be no lasting economy. If Mr. King be then appointed Surveyor General, the injustice will be very apparent, because I understand the Minister favoured Mr. Canning when the position was merely that of Surveyor General. These offices should not have been amalgamated, and I do not think the amalgamation will work. The permanent head of the Lands Department will have a tremendous amount of work to do if he carries out the wishes of the House; he will have more than he will be able to accomplish. I realise that the Honorary Minister has been in office only a very few months. I hope he is going to become very active, and that we shall have this country settled. The Minister comes from the South-West, and so ought to know something about that vast district where we have so many thousands of acres of Crown lands available for soldiers. As the leader of the Opposition said the other night, the future of Western Australia depends upon land settlement. It is possible

for an Honorary Minister to exercise absolute control over the department. As Honorary Minister I was for three years in charge of the Agricultural Department, and my powers were virtually those of the statutory Minister, except that the statutory requirements of the Act had to be complied with on infrequent occasions. If my statutory Minister had said to me, "No, I am not going to put my signature to that recommendation of yours," I would have said, "Very well, Mr. Statutory Minister, you can take over the job." We cannot have two Ministers in the one job. It is possible for an Honorary Minister to give as good service as if he were drawing a salary.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is the first time an Honorary Minister has been put in charge of a department of such importance.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: That is so, but I do not see how the question of salary can make any difference to the quality of his work in the department.

The Minister for Railways: Did you not have the Lands Department under Premier Moore?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: No, only the Agricultural Department. I think the Premier said the other night that the Honorary Minister was working with him. If it is a dual appointment, like the other dual appointment of Under Secretary and Surveyor General, I am afraid it will not work.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is necessary to have it a dual position, because we must have the statutory Minister.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Of course, but the Premier will leave the Honorary Minister to do the work of the department, even to the signing of all but very few papers which require the signature of the statutory Minister. The department will reflect the work of the Honorary Minister and of no one else. It cannot be otherwise, because questions come up from hour to hour and have to be decided by the Honorary Minister who is on the spot and who cannot be conferring with the Premier 20 or 30 times a day. In my experience there was no trouble whatever about it. My advice to the Honorary Minister is to bowl along and do things, get the surveyors to work. The surveyors have been idle for several years. In point of fact, there are very few surveyors available just now for the work of subdividing lands. If every available surveyor in the State were to be employed from to-morrow very little work could be accomplished, because there are so few surveyors. I doubt if the Minister could get 20 capable men for the work. I have little more to say, for it seems futile to discuss items so late in the year.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Some of the increases require reducing.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: There may be some items to discuss, but probably members can say all they desire to say about them in very few words. It is impossible in the middle of the summer, in the ninth month of the financial year, to deal satisfactorily with the proposals now before us. However, I felt that I could not allow the discussion to close without entering my protest against the appointment to the dual

positions of Under Secretary for Lands and Surveyor General.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Well, enter your protest in a practical way by remaining and voting.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I think that appointment was a very serious mistake.

Mr. MUNSIE (Hannans) [6.8]: Both speakers this afternoon have dealt fully with the appointment of Mr. King to the dual position of Under Secretary and Surveyor General. But for this I would have dealt with the question at some length. I thoroughly concur with the protests entered by the member for Kanowna (Hon. T. Walker) and the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell). I do not know what influences, if any, were responsible for the appointment of Mr. King, but I know that had that appointment been made during the regime of the Scaddan Government the then members of the Opposition, together with the Press of the State, would have placarded it throughout the country as spoils to the victor.

The Premier: Why spoils to the victor?

Mr. MUNSIE: I might ask why hon. members now opposite always raised that cry when our side were in power. Even if a man got a job with pick and shovel while the Labour Government were in power, the cry went up, "Spoils to the victor." Here we have appointed to a highly paid position a gentleman who, even according to the Premier himself, was not the most suitable for the post.

The Premier: No, no.

Mr. MUNSIE: Well, that is my interpretation of what was said. Mr. Canning was favoured for the position of Surveyor General. When amending the Land Act a little time ago the Wilson Government, through the Attorney General, called a conference of all patries on the subject of what were known as the pastoral clauses. An agreement was arrived at as to the amending of those clauses. The principal objection raised to the Bill by the then Opposition was the re-granting of those leases till 1948 without first having a classification of the lands. In deference to this the Attorney General drafted a new clause which provided, as pointed out by the member for Northam, that the Surveyor General shall be chairman of the classification board. If Mr. King is going to attempt to cope with the duties of Under Secretary for Lands, Surveyor General, and chairman of that reclassification board, he will be a pretty busy man for a few years to come. Although Mr. King is regarded as a capable surveyor, yet we have other men who have had longer experience at survey work than has Mr. King and who might even claim to be more capable at their work than is Mr. King. In any case, Mr. King has not done any surveying within the last 10 or 12 years. One would think that the man most suitable for the position of chairman of that reclassification board would be the man with the most practical knowledge of surveying.

The Premier: No man has a more practical knowledge than has Mr. King.

Mr. MUNSIE: Perhaps so, but it was gained a long time ago. For the chairman of that board to give a fair decision it is necessary that he should have some knowledge of the land.

The Premier: Mr. King has an extensive knowledge of the land; he has been all over the State.

Mr. MUNSIE: His knowledge might be even better if he had been engaged in survey work within the last 10 or 12 years. We have had the admission by the Honorary Minister (Hon. F. E. S. Willmott) that land settlement has fallen off considerably within the past year. In view of this, I desire to enter a protest against the re-opening of the district land offices, involving an unnecessary expenditure. I will not say that those offices would not be warranted if there was sufficient work for the district officers, but when land settlement is practically at a standstill, it is wrong for the Minister to take a step which involves totally unnecessary expenditure.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. MUNSIE: I wish to say a word or two in regard to repatriation. My sympathy goes out to the Minister controlling the repatriation scheme, whether in this Government or any other Government of the Commonwealth. I realise the enormous task that such a Minister has in front of him with regard to the future repatriation of our soldiers. So far as these Estimates are concerned, I would remind hon. members that the Minister gave us to understand that there were very few applications for land up to date on the part of returned soldiers. That can readily be accounted for. The men who are returning now are those who are returning as a result of wounds or sickness, and most of them are unfitted to go upon the land. The applications for land will, therefore, be very few indeed for the present. I believe while the present system of the indiscriminate repatriation of soldiers is in vogue, that we will always have few applications coming forward. I am absolutely opposed to the repatriation proposals which have been put forward up to date with regard to the Nornalup Inlet. I do not say this as in any way detrimental to that part of the State, or the land at Nornalup, but I am opposed to this particularly because of the lack of facilities for carrying the produce to market. I have said in this Chamber before that the Engineer-in-Chief, when asked what the probable cost of constructing a railway to link up the Nornalup Inlet with the present system would be, gave his estimate as £200,000. We know that we have not £200,000 to spend in building a railway. I am also of opinion that there are other methods which can be brought into operation more suitable for the repatriation of our soldiers on the land than the Nornalup Inlet proposition.

Mr. Thomson: What do you suggest?

Mr. MUNSIE: I will tell the hon. member directly. Even from the small committee which was appointed from this House to deal with the question of the repatriation of five soldiers on the Riverton Estate, we learned something. The evidence was very informative. It does seem strange to me that the departmental officers who gave evidence before that committee indicated that

very little had been done in regard to the repatriation of our soldiers on the land. Mr. Camm, the officer who has been appointed in charge of the repatriation scheme, put forward a suggestion to the committee—I did not know whether this appears in the evidence for I believe it was said more in conversation—that a classification of all lands within five miles of existing railways should be made at the earliest possible moment. I understand that this suggestion has been sent on to the Minister. I would like to go further than Mr. Camm and urge upon the Minister to take another aspect of the case seriously into consideration. I believe that Mr. Camm's proposal is only to have an investigation made with regard to the lands which are at present available to the Government, such as reserves or Crown lands adjacent to our railways. I wish the Government to go so far as to make a classification of all lands within close proximity to our existing railways.

Mr. Thomson: With a view to resuming them?

Mr. MUNSIE: Yes, if necessary. Undoubtedly in the early days the best land was taken up. I do not desire to do anyone an injustice who has land adjacent to our railways, but from the evidence that we had before the select committee it appears that the Government have difficulties there because immediately inquiries are made, particularly by a Government officer, as to the suitability of land owned by private individuals for the purpose of repatriation up goes the price at least 50 per cent. This is a question which the Government will have to take into consideration. I honestly believe that they will have to adopt measures similar to those introduced in the House four years ago. The Treasurer wants money. One good means of getting money is through the land, and the system introduced by the Labour Government was a fair system. This was that every owner of land was to be made his own valuator for the purposes of taxation, the Government having the right reserved to them to resume such land for repatriation purposes upon an increase of 10 per cent. on the taxation valuation.

Mr. Brown: A valuation has been made by the Federal authorities of all agricultural lands.

Mr. MUNSIE: I am not in the least alarmed that private owners who possess land which is wanted for repatriation purposes will place too high a value on their land for taxation purposes and by that means keep it away from the Government, because I feel sure that they will only put a fair value upon their land on account of the taxation they will have to pay. If an owner of land puts a fair value upon his property, he will not object, when the Government come along to resume it at an increase of 10 per cent., over and above his own valuation. I hope the Minister will consider this point of having a classification made of all lands, and will go so far as to get particulars showing the purposes for which the land so classified is suitable. Our greatest difficulty in regard to our finances is brought about by the fact that our



railways are not paying. Much of this is due to our past land policy. The member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell), who is known as the breezy optimist, so far as land settlement is concerned, was quite prepared to make all provisions for men to take up land anywhere in Western Australia, irrespective of water supply or railway communication. That went on for some time, and, although he obtained a considerable amount of settlement, the State as a whole has suffered ever since. I do contend that by getting this land classification there will be found to be ample room for the settlement of thousands of people along existing railways, without the necessity of building another mile of railway. We must have our land settled if we are going to make our railways pay.

Mr. Thomson: Why are not people on much of this land already?

Mr. MUNSIE: I do not know why these lands are not being occupied to-day, but I am perfectly satisfied, and the hon. member knows this himself, that there are thousands of acres of land along our existing railways, really good land, which could be put to almost any use and on which there are now probably only one or two sheep running.

Mr. Harrison: Do you refer to the alienated lands?

Mr. MUNSIE: There is no question about that so far as the alienated lands are concerned.

Mr. Thomson: I was referring to the other class of land.

Mr. MUNSIE: One has only to go from Perth to Bunbury to see thousands of acres of fairly good land adjacent to our railways, upon which only a few sheep are running. If we are going to make the State prosperous, and our returned soldiers happy and making a living for themselves and their families, we must get hold of land adjacent to our railways and the markets.

Mr. Harrison: What is your method of getting hold of such land?

Mr. MUNSIE: My method is to make the individual who owns the land his own valuator.

Hon. P. Collier: Take it, of course.

Mr. Broun: I wish the Taxation Department would take my property to-morrow on my valuation with 10 per cent. added; I would not be there long if they would do so.

Mr. MUNSIE: The hon. member may have had his land valued for him, and may not have valued it himself.

Mr. Broun: At my valuation.

Mr. MUNSIE: That may be too high.

Mr. Broun: It is below that which is placed on it by the Federal Department. They can have it for 10 per cent. more.

Mr. MUNSIE: Thousands of acres of land are held by private owners in this State, and when these persons are asked to put in their land-taxation returns they value their land at 500 per cent. less than they would ask for it if one went to buy it.

Mr. Harrison: How do you figure it out?

Mr. MUNSIE: We had an instance in this House in which a man valued his property at £800 for taxation purposes. When the Government wished to resume it he asked £4,000

for it. This is not an isolated case, for there are dozens of others of the kind.

Mr. Maley: The Commissioner for Taxation would not accept that valuation, surely?

Mr. MUNSIE: He did accept it and the owner paid taxation upon it to that amount. I do not say that the price at which the Government were prepared to buy it was the correct value of the land, and believe that the valuation placed upon it for taxation purposes was nearer the mark. It is strange, in view of the condemnation of the proposal to settle five returned soldiers on the Riverton estate, that when we come to get the views of the departmental officers placed before the Committee, we find that these officers know of no better land in the metropolitan area which can be obtained for repatriation purposes. If that is so I hardly see why any objection was raised to the repatriation of the men on that land. The Osborne Park estate was quoted by one Government expert who said that it was worth up to £60 an acre, but when asked whether the land the Government had resumed was better than the 60 acres of the Riverton estate, he said he did not think so.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore) [7.48]: It is only right that I should reply to some of the criticisms which have been made regarding the recent appointment in the Lands Department. The member for Kanowna stated that the Public Service Act had been violated and he also asked what motives were behind the appointment. I can assure the hon. member that there were no motives behind the appointment other than the interests of the Lands Department and the public service. The Public Service Act was not violated and no favouritism was shown.

Mr. Holman: Why were not the recommendations carried out in the first place?

The PREMIER: I will inform the House of the whole position. After the lamented death of the Surveyor General it was necessary to look out for someone to fill the vacancy. The Public Service Commissioner was asked to call for applications. These were invited and a number of surveyors in the Survey Department applied for the position. Mr. King also applied for the position.

Mr. Holman: What was the salary mentioned?

The PREMIER: The salary attached to the office was £600. Applications came in. I always had in my mind the advisableness of amalgamating the offices of Under Secretary and Surveyor General, and I talked the matter over with Mr. Clifton. At that time Mr. Clifton was Under Secretary. He was unable to fill the position of Surveyor General because he was not a surveyor. Mr. Clifton decided to retire from the service, and on his retirement the whole position was altered. A recommendation had been made by the Public Service Commissioner that Mr. Canning should be appointed Surveyor General. I returned that recommendation with this minute—

The appointment of Surveyor General is an important one and the question is receiving careful consideration at the hands of the Government.

In filling the position our desire was to secure the services of someone with professional and administrative ability and I went on in the minute to say—

Before definitely coming to a decision I should like to see whether you could consider the question of amalgamation of offices of Under Secretary and Surveyor General. We would be glad to have your views on the subject. The work of the department moves around these two offices to such an extent that greater efficiency might be obtained by co-ordination whereby all work would filter through one head endowed with administrative and professional ability. The settlement of our lands is the most important feature in the permanent progress of the country, so that nothing must be done to damage the prestige of settlement in the State or to impede settlement. Please think the matter over and let me have your views. The district officers should be made more use of and this will be better done through an Under Secretary-cum-Surveyor General.

Mr. Holman: It is a wonder you did not think of that before.

The PREMIER: I had thought of it.

Mr. Holman: You kept it to yourself.

The PREMIER: I do not know why the hon. member makes an interjection of that sort. I told the House that I had mentioned the matter to Mr. Clifton himself. It is no new thing. The files which passed through the hands of the two officers and the minutes which were built up simply appalled me, and my opinion at the time was that if we could find someone with administrative and professional ability to fill the two positions of Under Secretary and Surveyor General, considerable economy would be effected, and there would be better administration generally. The Under Secretary is really the permanent head of the Department and everything must filter through him. It was necessary for all survey matters to be dealt with by the Surveyor General and then they had to be passed on to the Under Secretary. All that, I consider, was loss of time. I never mentioned to the Public Service Commissioner the question of Mr. King being appointed to the position. The Commissioner in a minute to me said that he had considered the question while making his recommendation for the position of Surveyor General, but owing to the fact of Mr. Clifton being so long Under Secretary, he did not wish to interfere with that position. He did not consider it would be wise then to make a change of that kind. There were several applications before him for the position of Surveyor General and also the application of Mr. King. Mr. King had made a condition that his salary should be £804, and in making his recommendation the Commissioner could not consider Mr. King at all, and he recommended a man whom he considered was best fitted for the position. Then when this new phase of the question was placed before him he came to the conclusion that it would be better for the sake of economy and in the interests of the de-

partment to appoint an Under Secretary-cum-Surveyor General. Then of course he had to look out for a man with administrative and professional ability. He did not consider that any of the officers of the Lands Department who had applied for the position had proved their administrative ability, but Mr. King was a man who had done so and consequently he recommended Mr. King as best fitted to fill the dual position. I never mentioned the matter to the Public Service Commissioner, although I know some criticisms have been made with regard to this appointment. Only the other day I asked the Public Service Commissioner in my office whether I had ever mentioned to him the name of Mr. King and he replied that I had not said a single word about it. The matter was left entirely for the Commissioner's recommendation and his choice fell on Mr. King as being the candidate best qualified to fill the two positions. Cabinet thereupon approved of the appointment. We know full well that in 1899 when I chose Mr. King to fill the position of Under Secretary for Mines, the Mines Department was in a state of chaos. I did not rest until I got an efficient officer there. The appointment was made not because I was personally acquainted with Mr. King. As a matter of fact I knew very little of him, but I took the advice of those who did know him. Mr. King had been on the goldfields filling the position of Chief Inspecting Surveyor and the Goldfields people, knowing his value, advised me to try him in that position. In two years the Mines Department was brought out of a state of chaos into a condition of perfect order, and Mr. King has ever since filled the position of Under Secretary with satisfaction and credit. The year before I left the Mines Department the Mines Estimates were passed by the House in 20 minutes, and that was at a time when all the goldfields members were sitting in opposition to me. Nothing but eulogistic expressions were made with regard to the administration of that department. It is to be remembered too that the Mines Department at that period was working at higher pressure than it had ever worked in the history of Western Australia. Mr. King proved his administrative ability, and I considered that if we could combine the two positions we should have a man not only with professional, but with administrative ability. When the recommendation was made by the Public Service Commissioner, Cabinet had no hesitation in approving of it. Some hon. members have doubted whether Mr. King was really a professional surveyor, but I can assure the Committee that no man has a better record as a professional surveyor than Mr. King. He started surveying in this State in 1884 and he did a great deal of work on the goldfields.

Hon. P. Collier: You will find his initials on pegs right out back.

The PREMIER: Mr. King has worked as a surveyor in different parts of Western Australia. It was owing to his professional ability

that he was appointed chief inspecting surveyor on the goldfields, an important position in those days. Members know the large amount of money surveyors were making in surveying work in those days on the goldfields. Mr. King was head of the whole surveying work on the goldfields. There was more surveying work being done on the goldfields then than in the rest of Western Australia. Consequently, when the recommendation was made by the Public Service Commissioner I felt we had in Mr. King a man who had professional and administrative ability to fill the position. I feel sure he will do credit to his position in the Lands Department, as he has done credit to the position he held in the Mines Department. I had not spoken to Mr. King on the matter before his recommendation, but when the recommendation was made I sent for him and said, "Do you feel sure you can carry out the work?" He said "I do; I feel certain I can."

Mr. Green: Every man would be prepared to say that.

The PREMIER: I know the man well enough to feel he would not say he could carry out the work unless he could do so. The Lands Department wanted a new man who would place the affairs of the department in a better condition than they are in to-day.

Mr. O'Loughlen: What about the Mines Department?

The PREMIER: The Mines Department is in such excellent order, owing to the control by my friend opposite, and myself years ago, and I feel sure that someone will be found who will be able to carry on the administration of that department.

Hon. P. Collier: Anyone could run it after our terms.

The PREMIER: Someone will be found who will be able to do the work properly and give satisfaction.

Mr. Holman: Mr. King was getting close to the retiring age.

The PREMIER: I think Mr. King is 54 or 55 years of age, and if he does five years good work in the Lands Department he will do well. Another thing which is most important in the Lands Department, the Under Secretary should have a thorough knowledge of the State; he requires not only administrative ability but a thorough knowledge of the country which he has really to control.

Mr. Lambert: What would his prospective retiring allowance be?

The PREMIER: I do not regret in the least, in spite of the criticism that has been levelled at the appointment of Under Secretary and Surveyor General; I am certain it will be successful. The work of the department will be carried on better and more efficiently and more economically. I mentioned particularly in making the suggestion to the Public Service Commissioner that I did not want the Lands Department to lose prestige. If I thought it would lose prestige I would not suggest the appointment. If I thought land settlement would be in any way interfered with I would not have suggested that these two positions should be amalgamated. There has been this amalgamation elsewhere, but that was not my only reason for carrying it out here. I felt from my knowledge of the working of the department

for 12 months intimately, that it would be good for the working of the department. The same system holds good in other States of Australia. I trust members are satisfied that the Government have done the best thing possible in the circumstances. With regard to the violation of the Public Service Act, the Public Service Commissioner made the recommendation, and told me it was unnecessary to advertise the appointment. He said the applications had been sent in and he had selected this man for the position from among those applicants.

Mr. Lambert: They ought to have known there was an increase to £800 a year. The position was originally advertised at £600 a year.

The PREMIER: No one would have been selected from outside the service to fill a position of this sort.

Hon. T. Walker: There was an imposition under different circumstances.

The PREMIER: The Public Service Commissioner knows his book very well. The hon. member said the Act had been violated, but he has not shown where it has been violated. If the hon. member had quoted the sections of the Act then one might have been prepared to consider the question. It is easy to say that the Act has been violated, but one requires some proof.

Hon. T. Walker: There it is; it was a new position.

The PREMIER: I am satisfied it was not violated. I wish to clear up this point. The Lands Department is now in the control of an Honorary Minister. It has been criticised on that account. Why an Honorary Minister cannot control the Lands Department as well as a portfolioed Minister I cannot understand. If a member of Parliament is good enough to be an Honorary Minister he should be able to control any of the departments.

Hon. T. Walker: The anomaly is in not being able to fix the responsibility.

The PREMIER: The hon. member knows that an Honorary Minister has no portfolio. He has to administer some department, and come under a portfolioed Minister. An Honorary Minister has been placed in charge of the Lands Department. It would be impossible for the Premier to be continually administering his own department and properly control the Lands and Agricultural Departments. That was an arrangement made by myself with the approval of my colleagues. I am perfectly satisfied the Lands Department will be well administered by my colleague. I recognise full well the importance of this great department. I yield to no one in my opinion as to the settlement of land in Western Australia, and how the future of the country depends on the settlement of our vast areas. The thing is to induce people to come here. We boast of our enormous territory, but rocks and sand are not the strength of a country. It is men who are the strength of the country; it is men we want. If we get the country settled and create a yeoman class that will be the pride of the country in years to come we will have done something. The time is not opportune yet, but if we have an opportunity in the future, with the assistance of my colleague, I feel certain the settlement of the land in the country will not suffer at his hands or mine.

Mr. GREEN (Kalgoorlie) [8.10]: I regret to find in this department the promise from the Treasurer with reference to economy is not manifest in any particular. If there is any department in the State that is suffering a setback on account of the war it is the Agricultural Department. Yet, we find notwithstanding the fact that the area under wheat in 1916 was 1,734,000 acres in 1917 it was 1,560,000 acres, or 167,500 acres less in the one year.

Mr. Maley: I rise to a point of order. I was speaking last night on the Department of Agriculture and was not allowed to proceed.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member will confine himself to the Lands Department.

Hon. P. Collier: If you rule the hon. member out of order I shall have to dissent from your ruling. If a member may not refer to the area of land under cultivation what may he refer to? We are dealing with the Estimates and the member was giving statistics of the land under cultivation. If he cannot touch on that subject and you rule him out of order, I must dissent from your ruling.

The CHAIRMAN: I was endeavouring to give every latitude to members. I have before me the Estimates of the Minister for Lands, and the amount of money to be dealt with in that department. I was endeavouring to confine the debate at the present time to the administration of the Lands Department, and when we come to the Department of Agriculture to confine the debate to that department. Mr. Maley has risen to a point of order, because he was checked last evening for debating the Agricultural vote.

Mr. GREEN: I would not expect any member who has any idea of the procedure of the House to raise the objection which the member for Greenough has raised, but I forgive him for his inexperience. I want to make clear the point I desire, and which vitally affects the interests which the hon. member who has interrupted me is supposed to represent in this Chamber. The area of land in one year under crop has decreased by 167,500 acres, and that being so we should immediately recognise that there is no necessity for an increase in the vote for the Minister for Lands. We find, however, that the vote for last year was £44,315, whereas the Estimate for this year is £49,780, or an increase of £5,465. I regret that the Treasurer, who no doubt made his influence felt on several of the departments, has evidently not had the time to insist that the Lands Department Estimates should be cut down in accordance with the dwindling position of the industry this year. If agriculture continues to decrease at the rate of the past 12 months we shall soon find it in a parlous condition. I recognise that the decrease is due largely to the war, but I wish to point out that from 1912 to 1916 the average annual increase has been 280,000 acres. Taking that legitimate increase which should have accrued in normal times, and adding it to the decrease, we find that Western Australia now has 448,000 acres less under wheat than should be the case in normal conditions. There is a decrease of one-third of the country under wheat from

what we might have expected had there been no war.

Mr. Thomson: But you do not attribute the whole decrease to the war?

Mr. GREEN: I hope it is due solely to the war. If it is due to the natural development of the State then the land of Western Australia is not all that we have been told it is by the Country party. I am prepared to ascribe the decrease entirely to the war. However, these have been unusual times; and—to use the language of the demi-god at whose shrine this gentleman offers up his prayers—"in this grave national emergency" it is necessary for the Government of the day to cut into the Estimates in accordance with the decline of the agricultural industry. Yet we find several large increases in this vote.

Mr. Thomson: Would you favour a decrease in the Mines vote?

Mr. GREEN: There is a decrease in the Mines vote this year. The vote now under discussion contains several matters on which I propose to touch later. One of those matters is the large expenditure at Bridgetown. I have heard of Bridgetown, which is adorned by the fact that an Honorary Minister represents the electorate, in which the city of Bridgetown—if city it be—flourishes. I shall be very anxious, however, to know how it is that in this particular district of Bridgetown there has been such an enormous increase in Lands Department expenditure. I regret that the Premier was unable to convince me that the appointment of Mr. King to the position of Surveyor General and Under Secretary for Lands is justified. If an Under Secretary is to be taken from another department, as was done in the case of Mr. King, and placed over the heads of men like Mr. Morris and Mr. Canning, the effect upon the staff will be to make them feel that the Western Australian Government service is not one in which a man ought to give his best. The Premier has heard "whisperings from little birds." Let me tell the hon. gentleman something he knows well—that if an appointment of this character had been made by the Labour Government, with certain surroundings to which the member for Kanowna (Hon. T. Walker) has referred this afternoon—

The Premier: I think the hon. member should state exactly what the surroundings are.

Mr. GREEN: The surroundings mentioned by the member for Kanowna, who referred to blood relationship.

The Premier: There is no blood relationship at all; absolutely none.

Mr. GREEN: I am very pleased to hear it. I trust there is no relationship by either marriage or blood.

The Premier: You have no right to make insinuations such as those unless you know what you are talking about.

Mr. GREEN: I would like the assurance of the Premier, so that the country may be clear upon the matter. I would like the Premier's assurance that Mr. King is no blood relative of his.

The Premier: Absolutely none.

Mr. GREEN: I am pleased to hear it, and I think I have done a service to the Premier in coming to the point upon which—

The Premier: That would not affect the position if he was a good man.

Mr. GREEN: Quite so. But let us not sidetrack the question. Throughout the country there has been more than whispering, in several quarters, regarding this appointment. It has been said—I am not saying it, but it has been said—that one of the reasons for Mr. King's appointment is that he is a relative of the Premier. We have had the Premier's assurance that that is not the case, and I willingly accept the assurance.

The Premier: You used the words "blood relation."

Mr. GREEN: I understand, then, that Mr. King is a relative. That hardly alters the position; indeed, it gives some reason for the complexion which rumour, spreading throughout the country, has placed upon the appointment. I have the very highest opinion of the Premier's probity, as I have stated on several occasions; and I do not believe that relationship had anything to do with the appointment. But, in the circumstances, the Premier of a country requires to be particularly careful to see that the conditions under which public servants perform their work should not be disturbed by favours being extended to a relative of the Premier himself. I want to know what is the matter with Mr. Morris?

The Premier: Mr. Morris is not a surveyor.

Mr. GREEN: Mr. Morris was the late Under Secretary's chief assistant, though it is true he is not a surveyor. However, I doubt the wisdom of appointing a gentleman from another department, with which he has been conversant for many years, to an entirely new department, and so pushing aside Mr. Morris, against whom no word has been said by the Premier, against whom no charge has ever been made, who is absolutely one of the best men I ever met in the Lands Department. I always found that Mr. Morris could be approached on every occasion; and not only was he courteous, but he was able to grasp any matter presented to him. I do not desire to mention certain Under Secretaries by name, but I say that Mr. Morris compares with them as an electric light compares with a candle. In the circumstances, I consider the overlooking of Mr. Morris's claims to be scandalous. If the objection is raised that a surveyor was wanted, how is it that Mr. Canning's claims were overlooked? Mr. Canning is a surveyor who was in the department. In order to obtain a surveyor, it was not necessary to bring a man from another department, seeing that Mr. Canning was already in the Lands Department. I am satisfied that, notwithstanding the conspiracy of silence in the Press with regard to the misdeeds of the present Government, this matter will require a good deal of clearing up, and that in the immediate future. Let me say, too, that the Honorary Minister (Hon. F. E. S. Willmott) appointed Mr. Camm to deal with repatriation matters. I have nothing to say against Mr. Camm, who is an excellent officer and who did excellent work in the Industries Assistance Board.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Is he a blood relation of mine?

Mr. GREEN: I do not believe he is, but he resided in the Honorary Minister's electorate. I did not wish to mention that circumstance, but the Honorary Minister has drawn it from me. In my opinion, the Honorary Minister might have caused inquiry to be made whether it would be possible to secure a returned soldier to place in that position. There are some thousands of returned soldiers in the State, and if applications had been called from amongst them in the first instance, and then if no reliable men had been available amongst them, the Minister would have been justified in appointing Mr. Camm. But the appointment of a returned soldier to Mr. Camm's position might have been the beginning of a system for the general employment of returned soldiers in a department where sympathetic treatment of returned soldiers and knowledge of the requirements of returned soldiers are absolutely necessary. Whilst on the question of returned soldiers, let me deal briefly with the question of repatriation. I do not propose to twit the Government with not having done anything for repatriation. It is easy to find fault, or to make accusations of neglect, in a matter of that kind. I recognise that the scheme of repatriation will require considerable time and work and funds before it can be brought into operation. Let me sound a note of warning in connection with repatriation proposals. Let me sound that note of warning by expressing the hope that the land scandals in connection with repurchased estates which have occurred in South Australia and elsewhere in the East will at least not be repeated in Western Australia. I have before me a file dealing with the purchase of a portion of the Osborne Park estate for repatriation purposes. I was the means of having the file placed on the Table of the House, and a perusal of it makes rather interesting reading. In my opinion, it leaves the wisdom of the Government very much open to question as regards this purchase of portion of the Osborne Park estate.

The Minister for Mines: Another case of blood relationship?

Mr. GREEN: No; simply of blundering. In the first place, this land was offered to Mr. Underwood, when an Honorary Minister in the Labour Government. A Mr. Pearson saw Mr. Underwood on the 20th March, 1916. The agents for the estate were Messrs. Learmonth, Duffy & Co. As a result of the interview between Mr. Pearson and the Honorary Minister, the latter asked Mr. Pearson to submit an offer of the estate in writing. This was done by Learmonth, Duffy & Co. on the 21st October, 1916. They offered the whole of the estate, some thousands of acres, at £9 per acre. Let me mention that the vagaries of the price while this particular firm dickered with the Government from time to time, showed that the agents were very anxious to effect a sale, as they ultimately did, in spite of the fact that the Premier at one period was dead against the purchase. We find that on the 29th November, 1916, Learmonth, Duffy & Co. made a definite offer of 135 acres

in the estate at £11 5s. per acre, representing a rise of £2 5s. on the price at which they had previously offered the whole estate. That increase in price is perfectly understandable. What strikes me about this file is, not that certain portions of it have been withdrawn—such is not the case—but that there are in the correspondence voids which suggest that numerous telephonic messages have passed. Without this theory it is impossible to understand the difference in attitudes adopted by the department. In the compilation of a file there should be a record in writing of every step in the transaction. On the 15th February the company came along with an offer of 132 acres at £15 per acre.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Was that the same land?

Mr. GREEN: Practically the same; because the officer in charge of poultry had insisted that the land required for the purposes of poultry and pig rearing should be dry land and not swamp bottom. It was offered for £15 per acre. On the same day, this was recommended by one of the Under Secretaries for consideration. Upon that the Advisory Board, consisting of Messrs. Robinson, Cook, and Connor, were asked to inspect the land. The board did so and furnished a report, from which I give only a few excerpts, as follows:—

After inspection the board is of opinion that the situation of the land is suitable for poultry farming and pig breeding, if acquired at a reasonable rate, but consider the price asked for it is excessive, and further, that it is more than doubtful as to the probability of any returned soldier, unless specially qualified, making a living thereon, as there is no swamp whatever. The board is of opinion that the offer of the whole of the vacant land in the estate at a much reduced rate could be secured, and it would be prepared to recommend the purchase of 3,000 acres if a definite price not exceeding £7 were fixed, as the land contains a good deal of swamp and so would afford the means for a more satisfactory scheme. The board cannot recommend the present proposal at the price named.

They recommended that the whole of the estate, including some swamp land, should be purchased at £7 per acre. We find that Messrs. Learmonth, Duffy & Co. were prepared to sell the whole of the land at £7 per acre; and they pointed out that from 1910 to the 31st July, 1916, they had sold 1,727 acres of this estate at £29 per acre. We would expect from that, if the Premier had followed the advice of the experts sent out to inspect the land, that his recommendation would have been to purchase the land at £7 per acre, or that a price somewhere in that vicinity should be offered for 135 acres, or whatever he considered necessary.

The Attorney General: Was not that £7 for the whole of the estate of some 2,000 odd acres?

Mr. GREEN: Yes, the board sent out to inspect the land recommended that, in order to embrace some of the swamp land, it was advisable to purchase the whole of the estate.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Was it not for poultry farms?

Mr. GREEN: And for pig raising.

The Premier: No, not pigs.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Read the file and you will see that the poultry expert emphasises the fact that it is land high and dry.

The Premier: You cannot keep pigs and poultry together.

Mr. GREEN: I am not going to be side-tracked by the Premier, who probably has not read the file, although he has signed it in two places. No man in his sane moments would have put his signature to two entirely opposite propositions if he had perused the file. When this matter was presented to the Premier—

The Premier: He turned it down.

Mr. GREEN: Yes, and he said—

The larger offer cannot be entertained at present, but I wish the portion inspected by me, in company with the Hon. J. Mitchell, and Mr. Veryard, M.L.A., to hold good if at £7 per acre.

That was exactly the proposal of the board. The Premier continues—

Since the inspection referred to, the Minister for Works has informed me that the Railway Department holds a block along the line between Subiaco and West Subiaco.

And so it goes on. The Premier continues—

This might be obtained for selling to returned soldiers.

On the recommendation of the Premier the proposition was turned down. The Premier proposed that the smaller area should be purchased if possible at £7, but he did not propose to purchase the whole of the estate.

The Premier: That is not the area picked out eventually.

Mr. GREEN: Of course it is. Then, within a couple of days, the Premier jumped Jim Crow and paid a much larger amount. The next communication is from Messrs. Learmonth, Duffy & Co., dated the 30th May, as follows:—

Re Osborne Park estate. We hereby accept your verbal offer.

There is no communication of any kind in writing between the Government and Learmonth, Duffy & Co. from the time the Premier signed his minute stating that he was only prepared to take a small portion at £7 per acre. Evidently there had been a few telephonic messages.

The Premier: No telephonic messages.

Mr. GREEN: What was the verbal offer which the company was prepared to take? If there is anything calculated to create suspicion in the minds of the public it is that a file should be incomplete.

The Premier: I rather think a letter passed.

Mr. GREEN: There is nothing on the file to show that any letter passed.

The Premier: I know that I knocked them down £2.

Mr. GREEN: If this was the best bargain the Premier could make, I would not trust him to go to market to buy cabbages for my household. The letter from Messrs. Learmonth, Duffy & Co. ran as follows:—

We hereby accept your verbal offer of this morning for £12 per acre for 124 acres, lots 45 to 59 inclusive.

In answer to that the Premier wrote—

I accept Messrs. Learmonth, Duffy & Co.'s offer.

That was on the 30th May. The company in the first instance offered a portion of the estate at £11 5s. per acre. Then they came down to £7 per acre for the whole of the estate, and finally they landed the big fish at £12 per acre. I think the company is to be congratulated, but I am surprised that the Premier should have allowed himself to be hoodwinked in the matter. What explanation has the Premier to offer? The acreage concerned is somewhere about the acreage previously asked for. At all events it is within two or three acres of it.

The Premier: Oh, no.

Mr. GREEN: I await with interest the explanation of the Premier.

The Premier: I cannot explain—

Mr. GREEN: If the Premier cannot explain, to whom else shall we turn?

The Premier: I cannot explain because I cannot speak again on the general discussion.

Mr. GREEN: I think the Committee would be prepared to hear the Premier by way of explanation. I am dissatisfied. I am not imputing any motives to the Premier. There has, however, been a lack of business acumen manifested throughout these pages. Within a few days the Premier turns down any proposal unless he can get the whole of the 2,000 acres, and the incidents which I have related in connection with the turning down of this property and its subsequent purchase for £12 an acre require an explanation. I wish to warn the Ministry to be very careful in regard to the re-purchase of estates for repatriation purposes. It is so easy for a scandal to arise over matters of this kind. During the brief time when the question of the repurchase of estates for repatriation purposes has been before the Chamber this session I have had placed before me evidence—though I am not in a position to prove the facts—which shows that there have been times when people have tried to force the Ministry to go into certain schemes which would have been of immense benefit to the promoters. I trust that some explanation will be forthcoming on this particular point.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore) [S.47]: I thought it had been the practice in the past on the general debate upon departmental Estimates that members could only speak once.

Hon. P. Collier: So it is.

The PREMIER: I am informed by the Chairman, however, that I may speak again. The hon. member tried to impress upon the House the idea that there was something under-handed in this business.

Mr. Green: I say it was a bad business, that is all.

The PREMIER: There was a block of land of some 2,000 acres in extent offered to

the Government for repatriation purposes. When I went into the Lands Department and the question of repatriation for soldiers and the question of repatriation came in from people from all parts of Western Australia. I had piles of them in front of me. Everyone was patriotic, and had land to sell at a big price. The people said they would not sell their land at such a low price but for the fact that it was suitable for returned soldiers. I turned these applications down one after the other.

Mr. Munsie: I suppose they were the individuals who carried flags on their motor cars.

The PREMIER: With regard to the land in question I consider that the price asked was too high. There is a poultry school at Subiaco, and the people there were anxious to get some place on which the students who had been trained there could be placed. In company with the poultry expert of the department, several returned soldiers visited various parts of the metropolitan area, and at last found a patch of land at Osborne Park which they considered an ideal spot for poultry raising. The expert said it was just the right sort of country, for on this land green stuff could be grown and there was a swamp on either side, whilst the ground itself was dry for poultry. We offered to buy, I think, 100 acres for a poultry farm. I said that if the people would let the land go for £7 an acre I would buy it. That was the price put on the whole area. They replied that they would not accept £7 an acre for only 100 acres out of the 2,000, and considered that the patch which had been picked out contained some of the best of the land in the estate. I think it was some of the best of the land. I visited the block in company with the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell), the member for Leederville (Mr. Veryard), and an officer of the Lands Department. Sand does not appeal to me, but on the assurance of the poultry expert that this was just the place for poultry farming we negotiated for the purchase of the block. At first, the owners wanted £14 an acre and said they could not give the best of their land for £7 an acre. That was only reasonable. I said I wanted it for less, and offered £12 an acre and told them that the offer only remained open until that afternoon. During the afternoon the owners accepted the offer of £12 an acre, though it had been valued, I think, at £60 an acre by some people.

Mr. Harrison: Was there any road communication with this land?

The PREMIER: There was a good macadamised road running right through the block. That is what appealed to us. There is a swamp on either side of the block, and we knew from that fact that water could easily be obtained. Hon. members know that if we take the best land out of 2,000 acres it is worth considerably more than the whole block would be worth. I do not know why hon. members are so fond of thinking that there is some hanky panky business going on.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We had that sort of thing for five years from members opposite when we were in office.

The PREMIER: I have never charged hon. members opposite with any such thing.

Hon. P. Collier: You are suffering for some if the sins of your colleagues.

The PREMIER: I have never charged any hon. member of the House with any error unless I had clear proof. I am not going to hit any man below the belt, and will give every man credit for honesty of purpose until I find out something to the contrary.

Mr. Green: An explanation is a fair thing.

The PREMIER: When the hon. member finds out that in any of my actions there is not honesty of purpose, I will give him full permission, if he has the facts and the truth of the matter, to proclaim them from the housetops.

Mr. Green: I am not imputing any bad motives to the Premier.

The Minister for Works: You used the word "suspicion."

The PREMIER: The hon. member used the word "suspicion." Everything was absolutely above board, and everything was done that could be done to get the land as cheaply as possible. Let the hon. member put the people who sold the land into the witness box so that they may give sworn evidence, and it will then be found that there was nothing of the sort that he imputes going on. It is ridiculous for hon. members to make statements like this. It is an insult to the Committee. I do not look upon it as an insult to me because my conscience is clear. It is also an insult to the Government of the country. I regret that the hon. member thought fit to make use of such expressions.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We had to suffer insults for five years.

The PREMIER: It does not raise the position either of the country or of the responsible Government of the country. The member for Northam will be able to tell the House that everything was fair and above board. He was a colleague of mine at the time. Neither he nor I was a party to such action as is imputed to us by the member for Kalgoorlie.

Mr. GREEN (Kalgoorlie) [8.56]: I would like to say a few words by way of explanation. I cannot allow the Premier to say that I imputed to him any charge of dishonesty, but I would be failing in my duty if after a perusal of this file, in which it is stated that the Premier on the 11th April said he was against any further payment than £7 and within a few weeks agreed—

The Premier: Seven pounds for the whole 2,000 acres.

Mr. GREEN: Or that portion of the 2,000 acres.

The Premier: Not that portion.

Mr. GREEN: Yes. I am prepared to walk out of Parliament to-morrow if the file does not show that the Premier on the 11th April said that he was prepared to give £7 an acre for that portion of the estate which was examined by him and the member for Northam.

The Premier: If you wanted to sell me a horse I might offer you £7 for it to start with.

Mr. GREEN: On the 30th May, £12 was agreed to and there is nothing on the file to show that any correspondence took place between those days.

The Premier: I cannot account for that.

Mr. GREEN: That admission having been made by the Premier I consider I am within my rights, not as an insult to the Committee, in asking the Premier for an explanation to account for this big discrepancy.

The Premier: You want more than an explanation.

Mr. GREEN: No member of this Chamber would charge the Premier with want of honesty, but some people may go round and try to work a job on the Premier, knowing his transparent honesty.

#### Point of Order.

Hon. P. Collier: We ought to know where we are. I thought the leader of the House might be permitted to make an explanation, but we ought to stop there. I submit that no member may speak more than once in the general discussion on the Estimates.

The Premier: I thought that had been the general practice.

The Chairman: For the information of the Committee I will read Standing Order 386a.

Notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 372, no member (except the Minister, who shall have the right of reply) shall speak more than once during (a) a general discussion on the whole of the Estimates held on the first vote, (b) a general discussion on the administration of one department held on the first vote of that department. In both cases the reply of the Minister shall close the debate. In all other cases the rules of debate in Committee of the whole shall be maintained.

As it seems that we are dealing only with the vote of the Minister for Lands, no member can speak more than once, under Standing Order 386a.

The Premier: I believe that some years ago the Standing Orders Committee framed a new Standing Order, reading as follows—

Notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 372, no member (except the Minister, who shall have the right of reply) shall speak more than once during—(a) A general discussion on the whole of the Estimates held on the first vote. (b) A general discussion on the administration of one department held on the first vote of that department. In both cases the reply of the Minister shall close the debate. In all other cases the rules of debate in Committee of the whole shall be maintained.

We have been holding a general discussion on the administration of the Lands Department. It is well that we should know exactly where we are. Though I bow to your ruling, Mr. Chairman, I hold that the Standing Order is perfectly clear. We have been holding a general discussion on one department, and that department is the Lands Department. In that discussion no member can speak more than once except the Minister, who has the right of reply.



The Chairman: Last evening Mr. Pickering, in discussing the vote of the Minister for Lands, referred to items under the Minister for Agriculture. I thought it was generally understood last night that the debate was to be confined strictly to "Lands and Surveys," and that the vote of the Minister for Agriculture would be dealt with at a later stage. Ever since then I have endeavoured to confine this discussion to "Lands and Surveys." I thought it was my duty to give every hon. member the right to speak more than once. We have been dealing with this particular Department of Lands and Surveys, which does not cover the whole of the Minister's votes.

Hon. T. Walker: Under your ruling, Sir, the debate would be interminable. Therefore, unless you see fit to alter your ruling, Sir, I think it will be necessary to test the feeling of the House. The Standing Order appearing between pages 78 and 79 is perfectly clear. It has already been read by the Premier. Under that Standing Order we debate this vote as if it were the second reading of a Bill.

The Chairman: How does the hon. member construe paragraph (b) of Standing Order 386a?

Hon. T. Walker: I construe it that we have been discussing generally one or more or all of the features coming under the administration of the Lands Department.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The division is "Lands and Agriculture."

Hon. T. Walker: It would embrace both, so that we can discuss both; but each member who desires to speak can speak only once. This is of the nature of a second reading debate. It is just a similar application to the departments of the principles which we apply to the general discussion on the Estimates. The general discussion on the Estimates is like the second reading of a Bill; each member is entitled to speak once and no more, except the Minister, who has the right to reply at the termination of the debate. Then, when we get to items, we change the order; that is to say, any member can speak as often as he sees fit.

The Minister for Mines: We go back then to Standing Order 372.

Hon. T. Walker: I remember the introduction of this supplementary Standing Order. It was introduced for the purpose of limitation of debate on the general Estimates and on the Estimates of departments. It was made a special provision, so that there should be only one speech delivered by the particular speakers upon the administration of the department. We have not yet reached the items; we are only discussing features of the general administration of the department; and whilst we are discussing those features, only one speech can be delivered by each speaker. As soon as we have finished and have got to the items, then any member can speak more than once, but not until then. If you see the force of what I have said, Mr. Chairman, which is the correct history of the Standing Order, I will not put the matter to the House; but if you still persist that in the general discussion on administration a member has the right to speak more than once, then, for the purpose of putting the matter in order, I shall have to dissent from your ruling.

Mr. Pickering: When the Minister introduced the vote it was said that he was dealing only with the Lands Department and not with the Agricultural Department. I think the opinion of members generally was that we were speaking only on "Lands" and not on "Agriculture."

Hon. T. Walker: That might be a misunderstanding.

Mr. Pickering: In that case, we have still the right to speak on the Agricultural Department.

The Premier: Even if the two were combined, the same position holds good.

Mr. Pickering: It was distinctly laid down by the Minister in introducing these Estimates that we were dealing only with the Lands Department, and not with the Agricultural Department.

Mr. Holman: The misunderstanding has arisen from the fact that those departments are not controlled by one Minister, but by three Ministers. We have first the nominal Minister for Lands, who is the Premier. Then we have the Honorary Minister, Mr. Willmott. After that there is another Honorary Minister, Mr. Baxter. When I was discussing these particular Estimates last night I dealt with the whole department controlled by the portfolio Minister, the Premier. The very reason why the new Standing Order was introduced was to prevent members from speaking generally on the question more than once. The decision given by you, Sir, on the first occasion was in accordance with the Standing Order; upon that there can be no doubt. A member can speak only once generally on these Estimates. The Minister for Lands did not speak himself, but spoke through the Honorary Minister, who has no standing in the matter at all, any more than has any other hon. member. That is how the mistake has arisen. Once a member has spoken on the department generally, there is no possible chance of his speaking again, either on the Lands Department or on the Agricultural Department.

Mr. Maley: The Chairman ruled me out of order.

The Chairman: I am extremely sorry. I should like to make my position as clear as possible, and then, if the member for Kanowna thinks my contention unsound, and will place his dissent in writing, I will refer it to the Speaker. My contention is that if the debate has taken place on the two votes "Lands and Surveys" and "Agriculture" generally, paragraph (b) of Standing Order 386a will apply. But I contend that, as we are dealing only with a portion of the vote under discussion, members have the privilege of speaking more than once. If the member for Kanowna, or any other hon. member, thinks I am not right, let him state his dissent in writing, and I shall refer it to the Speaker.

Mr. Holman: In the first place, Mr. Chairman, will you tell us who is the Minister for Lands?

The Chairman: Mr. Willmott is the gentleman in charge of—

Mr. Holman: It does not matter who is the gentleman in charge. Will you tell us, Sir, who is the Minister for Lands?

The Chairman: The Premier.

Dissent from the Chairman's ruling.

Hon. T. Walker: I shall merely move—

"That this Committee dissent from your ruling."

The grounds of that dissent I shall now state. The Chair has by some inadvertence, construed the debate as one appertaining only to the Minister for Lands or the Lands Department. If we look at the heading of the Estimates we find that the division is headed "Lands and Agriculture." Neither the Chair, nor any hon. member, has a right to make an artificial division between these two, "Lands" and "Agriculture," and to say that they are two separate departments. They are separate in administration, I admit; but for the purpose of discussing the Estimates they are one department—"Minister for Lands and Agriculture." That is to say, the conjunction "and" joins "Agriculture" with "Lands." The Premier is the Minister in this House who is Minister for Lands and Agriculture. He is assisted by an Honorary Minister—or by two Honorary Ministers, as it has been put by the member for Murchison. But the Premier is the responsible Minister. We are discussing his department—the department here characterised as "Lands and Agriculture." You, Sir, for some reason fell into error. I admit that the Committee generally fell into the same error, and that you were not alone in the mistake. For some reason or other you, Mr. Chairman, have separated these two, as though "Lands and Surveys" were a separate administrative department and "Agriculture" another separate administrative department, whereas for the purposes of this debate they are only one. We have discussed the general Estimates, and we are now discussing division 10 of the Estimates, and therefore we are not discussing an item. Will you, Mr. Chairman, take that point into remembrance? We are not discussing an item; we are generally discussing the first vote, which permits us to survey the whole of this section of the Estimates. Under that every member is allowed to allude to any portion, either of the Lands Department or Agricultural Department. If there has been any slip it is the fault of the Chamber not having grasped the significance of paragraph (b) of Standing Order 386a. There can be no double meaning to that paragraph (b), which sets out—

Notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 372, no member . . . shall speak more than once during a general discussion on the administration of one department held on the first vote of that department.

This is a discussion held on the first vote of the Department of the Minister for Lands and Agriculture, and no member can speak more than once. You having ruled to the contrary, I desire to submit the motion.

The Speaker resumed the Chair.

The Chairman: I have to report that when the Committee came to the vote "Minister

for Lands and Agriculture," the discussion which began last night centred around "Lands and Surveys." It was generally understood by the Committee that the debate should be confined to "Lands and Surveys," and the Committee intended, as I understood, to deal with the vote "Minister for Agriculture" separately. As the debate proceeded, I gave more than one member the right to speak twice, believing that the whole of the vote, which covers two departments, namely "Lands and Surveys" and "Agriculture generally," was not under discussion, but that it had been divided. The member for Kanowna has objected to my ruling. I quoted Standing Order 386a paragraph (b), and the member for Kanowna contends that my construction of paragraph (b) is wrong. Therefore I am reporting the matter for your decision. If the debate had taken place on the two votes "Lands and Surveys" and "Agriculture generally," paragraph (b) would have applied, but as we were only dealing with "Minister for Lands" I contend that every member had the right to speak more than once.

Hon. T. Walker: The distinction made by the Chairman of Committees between "Lands" and "Agriculture" is not borne out by the heading of Section 10 of the Estimates. We are not discussing the first vote; we are discussing "Minister for Lands and Agriculture." The responsible Minister for Lands and Agriculture is the Minister who controls the department, and the two branches are under the one heading in the Estimates. I contend that paragraph (b) of Standing Order 386a applies. The reasons given by the Chairman do not alter the force and application of that paragraph which has been quoted. If for convenience of debate a line had been drawn between "Lands" and "Agriculture" and they had been made for the purposes of debate two separate and distinct departments, and it was desired to confine the debate entirely to "Lands" and to exclude "Agriculture," we would still be discussing the first vote on the Estimates of "Lands." Therefore, paragraph (b) would apply equally. So, whether we divide "Lands" and "Agriculture" for the purpose of debate, or treat them as one, I contend you cannot allow members to speak more than once.

Mr. Holman: I contend that the point of order raised by the member for Kanowna is correct. It will be remembered that in 1913 this question was raised in the House, and owing to the fact that more than one decision was given by the Chairman of Committees, the matter was referred to the Standing Orders Committee. After a considerable amount of debate that Committee brought down new Standing Orders to prevent needless discussion on the various departments. The question has been raised as to the right of members to speak twice on the one department. There is no possibility of getting away from the fact that there is only one Minister in charge of the Departments of Lands and Agriculture, and that Minister is Mr. Lefroy. If hon. members will look on the cover of "Hansard" they will find a list of the portfolios

held by Ministers. According to that list Mr. Lefroy is Premier and Minister for Lands and Agriculture. The Honorary Minister (Mr. Willmott), who introduced the Estimates of this department, had no more right to do so than any other member. It is an impossibility for the Premier to delegate the right which is his to introduce Estimates to an Honorary Minister, any more than an hon. member has the right to speak twice in Committee on the Estimates on the general debate. When I was speaking on the two departments last night, the Premier showed that he was anxious to curtail the discussion by rising to a point of order on a question to which I was referring. I knew at the time that I had a perfect right to speak on Lands and Agriculture. There was no desire whatever on my part to delay proceedings. If the ruling is given against the member for Kanowna hon. members will have the right to speak on every sub-department as many times as they desire. The object has been all along to prevent needless discussion.

Hon. J. Mitchell: I understand that the hon. member contends that these Estimates must be spoken to as one department. That is wrong. Suppose the Minister for Lands were Minister for Law, the Committee could not discuss Lands and Law together.

Hon. T. Walker: Of course not, because the Estimates would not be together as these are. Look at the heading and you will see that "Minister for Lands and Agriculture" is a section of the Estimates.

Hon. J. Mitchell: These are two distinct departments, "Lands and Surveys" and "Agriculture Generally." In the past they have always been kept separate and that practice should still be followed.

Hon. P. Collier: I hope the House will not become confused by dealing with the two points at once. Members have to decide now whether they are to be permitted to take part in a general discussion on the Agricultural Department, but I submit we need not take that point till we come to it. The only point to be decided at present is whether, under Standing Order 386a, paragraph (b), a member may speak more than once on a general discussion. It does not matter. The point of order raised by the member for Kanowna (Hon. T. Walker) is not affected in any way by the contention of some members that they should be permitted to speak again to the general discussion on the Agricultural Department. The point clearly is that no member is entitled to speak twice on the general discussion of a department. We have had a general discussion on the Lands Department. Whether or not that includes the Agricultural Department is a point we can decide later on.

The Attorney General: I rise to support the contention of the member for Kanowna, but from a different point of view from that taken by the member for Murchison (Mr. Holman). The Premier holds the portfolio of Lands and of Agriculture, two separate departments. We have one Minister controlling two departments. We have chosen to

take the one department, that of Lands, first, and the Standing Order 386a (b) says that "A general discussion on the administration of one department held on the first vote of that department—in both cases the reply of the Minister shall close the debate." If it were otherwise, the discussion that has taken place during the last six or seven hours, including last evening, has been all in vain, because several members were called to order for attempting to discuss the Agricultural Department and we were confined to the Lands Department alone.

Hon. P. Collier: Whether the two departments are one or separate does not affect the validity of the point of order.

The Attorney General: That is so, but the Committee has been discussing this department as if it were the Department of Lands. The portfolio covers the two departments, that of Lands and of Agriculture, but we are now dealing solely with the Department of Lands, and the Standing Orders say that when dealing with the one department we shall speak only once. I say with all due respect that the Chairman of Committees was quite wrong in his ruling.

Mr. Troy: On the facts I should say the Chairman may be technically correct, but that his ruling is against the practice and against the Standing Orders. Having put these votes separately the Chairman may be justified in saying that he is right technically, but I do not think we should allow a technicality to interfere with the sense of the Standing Orders.

Mr. Pickering: If the ruling holds good, how will it apply when we come to "Colonial Secretary and Minister for Education" or to "Attorney General and Minister for Industries"? All these are separate departments, but if it be ruled that we have discussed both Lands and Agriculture, how will the ruling stand when we reach these other departments?

Mr. Speaker: The Chairman of Committees has ruled that a member is allowed to speak twice on Lands and Surveys. To that ruling the member for Kanowna has taken exception and moved

That the Committee dissents from your ruling that a member may speak more than once on the general discussion of the first item of a department.

The hon. member says, "In the general discussion," and he is relying on paragraph (b) of the Standing Order 386a, which reads as follows:—

A general discussion on the administration of one department held on the first vote of that department—in both cases the reply of the Minister shall close the debate.

I have not heard the discussion, but I am informed that there has been no general discussion on Lands and Surveys and on Agriculture, and that members have been ruled out when they attempted to discuss Agriculture.

Mr. Holman: The point was raised last night against me, but I was not ruled out.

Hon. P. Collier: Others were.

Mr. Speaker: If the general discussion has been allowed on the Lands and Surveys and on Agriculture as well, then paragraph (b) would apply, but if the discussion has hinged on Lands and Surveys alone, it cannot apply.

Hon. T. Walker: It has been a general discussion.

Mr. Speaker: I am informed that there has been no general discussion on the Agriculture Department.

Mr. Holman: I discussed the Agriculture Department mainly when I spoke last night, and the Premier raised a point of order against me.

Mr. Speaker: I have been informed that Agriculture has not been permitted to be discussed by the Chairman of Committees. If that be so, there has not been a general discussion, consequently paragraph (b) will not apply.

Hon. T. Walker: May I put the matter clearly? There has been a misunderstanding. It has been understood that these two departments were separate departments. The impression has been conveyed that Lands was a department and that Agriculture was another department, and that a general discussion could take place on Lands, and that afterwards a general discussion on Agriculture could be held. That has been the understanding of the Committee, and it was so understood by the Chairman. He has confined the debate in some instances, not in all, to Lands. We have been discussing the first vote that appears in the Lands Department. The Standing Order reads—

A general discussion on the administration of one department, held on the first vote—

That is what characterises it as a general discussion. Once we get past the first vote, we are in Committee, but on the first vote of a department, the discussion is always general. The Chairman may have made a mistake in permitting it, but that does not alter the Standing Orders; it is his mistake. On that first vote the discussion is general, and we have been regarding it as general, although perhaps not quite general enough because, under the impression that they are two departments quite separate, the Lands and the Agriculture, it has been sought to confine us to Lands as distinct from Agriculture. Whether the Chairman has been right in delimiting it or not, does not affect the Standing Order. It is an injustice done to the Committee to limit the debate and leave out Agriculture. If your ruling is right, it is the fault of the Chairman.

Mr. Speaker: And the fault of the Committee for allowing it.

Hon. T. Walker: In a way, yes; but that does not alter your ruling that on the general discussion of the first vote a member can speak only once.

Mr. Speaker: If I have been correctly informed, a general discussion on Agriculture has not taken place.

Hon. P. Collier: The point of order arose through the desire of some members to speak twice on Lands and Surveys, not on Agriculture.

I wish to remove any conception you may have that this point has arisen through the desire of members who have already spoken on Lands and Surveys to again speak on Agriculture. The point has arisen through members claiming the right to speak more than once on Lands and Surveys, not on Agriculture. It is that which makes them so clearly out of order.

Mr. Holman: The Chairman of Committees called on department No. 10, Minister for Lands and Agriculture. The department without doubt has been placed in the hands of the Honorary Minister who has no standing as Minister for Lands. Although he may be looking after the department, he has no more right to speak twice on this question than any other member of the Committee.

Mr. Speaker: I am not dealing with that question.

Mr. Holman: But that is the question I am dealing with. Is that not the point of order?

Mr. Speaker: I have another point of order with which I am now dealing.

Mr. Holman: But that is the point of order raised, that members have a right to speak again generally on Agriculture. I am endeavouring to point out that no member of the Committee has a right to speak twice on Lands and Agriculture. Who is the Minister for Lands and Agriculture? the Hon. H. B. Lefroy, and he has no right to delegate his powers to anyone else.

Mr. Speaker: As no discussion has been allowed to take place on Agriculture, paragraph (b) of Standing Order 386a cannot apply because the general discussion has not taken place. It has not under those conditions.

Hon. T. Walker: Mr. Speaker has been wrongly informed.

Mr. Holman: The few remarks I made last night dealt solely with the Agricultural department.

Mr. Speaker: I have given my ruling.

Mr. Holman: The point has not been raised. I refuse to accept the point.

Dissent from the Speaker's ruling.

Hon. T. Walker: If that is your ruling, Mr. Speaker, I must ask the House to dissent from it. It is no use having Standing Orders unless we can have them applied. Not to go over the grounds again, I wish to make the point perfectly clear. Your information has not been full and complete. You have admitted that you have not heard the debate and therefore cannot judge. There may have been a misunderstanding, a very logical reason for misunderstanding because hitherto in every debate in this House, as long as I can remember, the Lands have been treated as one department and Agriculture as a separate and distinct department. The Lands Department has been discussed generally and Agriculture has been discussed generally. That you will find by reference to "Hansard." They have been treated as distinct and separate departments. The argument is maintainable when one department is under one Minister, under section 10 of the Estimates, where we have a Minister for Lands and Agriculture, but it does not matter whether

for the purposes of debate we take Lands and Agriculture as one or two departments. If we take them as one department we are still discussing the first vote and that first vote permits of a general discussion, inclusive of agriculture. But if the Chairman of Committees, the Minister in charge, and members of the Committee are under a mistaken conception that it is not one, but two departments and confine the general discussion to the Lands Department, then the rule applies. If Lands are taken as one distinct and separate department and Agriculture another and we are discussing the first vote of the Lands, it is a general discussion and no member can therefore be allowed to speak more than once. Even though Lands and Agriculture be taken as one department, and through a misunderstanding on the part of the Minister, the Chairman of the Committee or members of the Committee, it does not alter the force of the Standing Order which no speaker or member can over-ride. It is still the first item of the department, however, wrongfully the Chairman of Committees may have prevented discussion. It is still a general debate and still members are only allowed to speak once. That does not prove we have got to the items. We were on the general discussion. We discussed all round the compass, and we should have been allowed to go much further if we had wished. Whatever members wished could have been brought forward in relation to the Lands Department.

Mr. Speaker: Was agriculture discussed?

Hon. T. Walker: Yes, by certain members. The point was raised every time, not because the Chairman of Committees believed we were dealing with items, but because the Chairman of Committees like many other members, believed that the Lands Department alone was being discussed, and that Agriculture was a separate department—not a separate item—and that we should have a separate discussion on the vote for the Agricultural Department. Whether we consider this one department or two we are still on the general discussion and on it no member can speak more than once. We are not speaking to the items but to the first vote of the department. If there has been a limitation it is not a departure from the Standing Orders, but because it was so understood that Agriculture was a separate department and that there would be a general discussion when we reached Agriculture. I move—

“That Mr. Speaker’s ruling be dissented from.”

Mr. Money: I second the motion. I think a misconception has arisen because the department has been treated as an item. The different votes in the department are not added together; there is only one amount given. There is on the one page, Lands and Surveys, and Agriculture—two on the one page. The whole trouble has arisen through the department being taken as an item.

The Minister for Mines: Would it not be better for the question to be put to you, Sir, whether there are two departments or one? If you rule there are two departments, that of Lands and

of Agriculture, there is no reason to dispute your ruling. The Chairman can then resume his seat, the discussion can continue generally on the Lands Department and we can deal with items and when the new department comes along, if you rule there are two departments, there can be a new discussion on Agriculture. I do not think there will be any necessity to proceed with the motion to disagree with your ruling if as a first step you give a ruling as to whether there are two departments to be discussed.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The practice has been to only have one general discussion on a department. I want to point out that if the hon. member’s suggestion is carried out that there are two departments and the Opposition desired, they could keep members here till Christmas because members could speak as often as they liked. They could speak on the general discussion of both departments and then on the items as often as they pleased, because the Chairman has ruled that members can speak more than once. If we had been sitting here in normal times this is the best thing that could happen for an Opposition, and I think we ought to have taken the leader of the Opposition to task for taking this matter up. The Government ought to have taken the point. Still the leader of the Opposition has given his guarantee to assist the Government as much as possible. I would like to speak twice myself.

The Minister for Mines: If the Speaker rules that there are two departments there can be only one speech for each member on the general discussion of this department.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: If that has taken place here I think there ought to be a general discussion on Agriculture. To-night members have claimed to speak twice in the general discussion on Lands and Surveys. I have not known it before, but I wish to say again that if it is so it is the best thing that could happen for an Opposition.

Mr. Draper: In my opinion the point of order taken by the member for Kanowna is perfectly correct, and the decision depends entirely upon what a department is. There seems to be some confusion because the Minister for Lands is the executive officer, and it may be thought, therefore, that there cannot be two departments under one executive officer. The question of an executive officer is quite distinct from the question of the departments under his control. There are six executive officers provided by the Constitution Act, but there may be 12 departments. It is perfectly clear from the Standing Orders that where we have departmental Estimates discussed we can only speak once on the general discussion. The Department of Lands is one department and we can only speak once on that, but the Department of Agriculture is another department. Both these departments may be under the one executive officer.

The Minister for Mines: As in the case of the Railways and Mines Departments.

Mr. Draper: The question is as to what constitutes a department, and has nothing

to do with the executive officer in charge of the department. The Estimates show that there are two departments, and therefore we can only speak once on the general discussion upon either of these departments.

The Premier: I should like to be able to assist you, Sir, in this matter, and would be loth to see your ruling disagreed with. We must have been discussing something, and what we have been discussing since last evening has been the Estimates of the Lands Department. It was generally recognised that we were discussing these particular Estimates. Whether the Chairman put the vote on the first item or not does not matter, we were discussing generally the Lands Department Estimates. If on the general discussion of the Lands Department Estimates hon. members were allowed to speak as often as they liked there would be no end to the number of speeches. This new Standing Order was brought into operation a few years ago in order to prevent this repeated discussion on departmental Votes. We were discussing the first item of the Estimates of the Lands Department, and we must start with a single item. It has been the custom here for a long time past that hon. members should not address themselves to the Chair more than once during the general debate on the departmental Estimates. The Committee was on the general debate of the Lands Department Estimates. It matters little whether it was the Lands Department and the Agricultural Department, or whether it was the Lands Department alone. The same thing applies to the one as to the two combined. I was under the impression, after I had spoken once on the Lands Department Estimates, that I could not speak again, but was allowed to do so. Following upon that another hon. member desired to speak.

Hon. P. Collier: Your remarks were more by way of a personal explanation.

The Premier: I asked the Chairman if I could be permitted to speak, and he replied that I could do so. A point of order was then raised by the member for Kanowna. The whole spirit of the Standing Orders is to prevent hon. members from speaking more than once on the general discussion upon the Estimates.

Hon. P. Collier: If it does not mean that what does it mean?

The Premier: It was framed for that purpose. The House was in this difficulty once before, and in order to make this perfectly clear the Standing Order which has been mentioned was framed. I hope, Sir, you will reconsider this matter and will be able to deal with it in a different way.

Mr. Speaker: If hon. members will carry their minds back, they will recollect the reason why this rule (b) was put into the Standing Orders, and that it was put in to enable the Vote of the Mines Department to be discussed. They will know that the Mines Department was cut up into three different Departments, the Mines, the Geological and the Analytical Departments, and that to enable these three departments to be discussed separately, this rule was

brought in. I have not heard the debate, as hon. members know, and as the case was put to me, so have I ruled. Hon. members who were present and heard the debate appear to have conflicting ideas as to how it was conducted, and as I was not present myself it is impossible for me, who was absent from the Chamber, to know. Furthermore, if hon. members themselves have conflicting ideas on the subject, how can they expect me to know what was done? It is not my intention to give a ruling against the spirit of the Standing Orders, but I had to give a ruling as to the position as it was placed before me in accordance with the Standing Orders. Under those conditions I felt that my ruling was a sound one, but in view of what has been argued since, I do not feel disposed to uphold that ruling. Hon. members themselves are not quite sure as to what has taken place. At any rate, they acquiesced by their silence in what was done. The debate has ranged around the Lands and Surveys Vote since last night. As has been pointed out, there ought to be some way out of the difficulty. I have no desire to endeavour to force a ruling upon the House which is not a sound one. I gave my ruling on the statements that were placed before me. From what I have heard from hon. members, and owing to the conflicting ideas on the part of those who have heard the debate, I do not feel disposed to adhere to my ruling. I should like to hear hon. members place their views accurately before me. I am not prepared to stand by my ruling after what I have heard up to the present.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Whether I am right or wrong, I assert that I introduced the Estimates of the Lands Department, a Vote for Lands and Surveys of £46,131, and nothing else. I spoke to that vote and that department only. Several hon. members following me brought in matters which appertained to the Agricultural Department and were called to order for so doing.

Mr. Holman: They were not called to order.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): The member for Murchison brought in matters extraneous to the Lands and Surveys Department, but the debate was a general discussion on the Lands and Surveys Department as a separate department from the Agricultural Department. That, Sir, was the feeling of the Committee during the discussion. In introducing the debate I applied my remarks, and said that I did so, to the Lands and Surveys Department, and nothing else came under discussion.

Hon. T. Walker: It is a separate department.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): It is a separate department and I introduced these Estimates, as I contend I had a perfect right to do. I further contend that when I rise to reply this will close the discussion on the Lands and Surveys Vote, but will not affect the Agricultural Department Vote in the slightest degree.

Mr. Mullany: The whole position, confusing as it is, appears to have arisen from the method in which these items are shown on the

Estimates. If hon. members will look at page 27 of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, they will see that it is headed "Minister for Lands and Agriculture" and the first vote is for "Lands and Surveys." Lower down on the same page they will see "Minister for Agriculture" and the vote for "Agriculture generally." I contend that this has led to confusion. When we look further we find that the Estimates for Lands and Surveys go on in their sequence up to item 167. Turning over still further, notwithstanding that it is apparently under the one heading, we find "Minister for Agriculture" and a fresh sequence of itemised numbers. I believe that this vote "Minister for Agriculture" and "Agriculture generally" should have been put under its proper heading, and be dealt with when we come to the items under "Agriculture generally." I do not see how it is possible to conform to the rules of the House when the items are shown in this way. If we were now to pass the general discussion on this vote of the Minister for Lands and Surveys that would bring us to the point of discussing the items in connection with the "Lands and Surveys." Later on, when we come to discuss the Minister for Agriculture's Department, it will mean turning back no less than three pages on the Estimates which is always, I think, against the Standing Orders and the practice of the Committee.

Mr. Pilkington: This much to me is clear, that the debate has proceeded throughout upon the assumption that there are two departments, a Department of Lands and Surveys and a Department of Agriculture, and upon the assumption that the Committee was discussing the first item of the Department of Lands and Surveys. It was because we were discussing the first item of that department that the Chairman of Committees ruled hon. members out of order who referred to Agriculture, because that is in another department. If it had not been in another department, there would have been no ground for his ruling out of order for reference to Agriculture. That seems to me the basis upon which we have proceeded; and I submit, with respect, that it is the basis upon which we should continue.

Mr. Speaker: I am not pressing my ruling.

Hon. T. Walker: In the circumstances, Sir, I withdraw my motion of dissent. But there will have to be a ruling. You withdraw your ruling, I understand, and substitute the other ruling.

Mr. Speaker: I withdraw my ruling, which means that I am not upholding the Chairman. Is it the pleasure of the House that this motion be withdrawn?

Members: Aye.

Motion by leave withdrawn.

Committee resumed.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. T. Robinson—Canning) [10.20]: I presume that we now resume the discussion on the Lands Department. The member for Kalgoorlie took occasion to refer to the soldiers' settlement at Osborne Park, and to the poultry farms about to be established there. The farm buildings and conveniences there are being erected

by the Department of Industries. Hearing that there was some criticism, initiated by the member for Albany, as to the suitability of the land for the purpose, I asked Mr. Johnson, the secretary to the poultry school for soldiers at Subiaco, to inspect the land and report to me. I received his reply a day or two ago. It reads as follows:—

My committee consider this land most suitable for the objects in view. The land is high, and well drained, being an ideal building area. Water is obtainable in large quantities at a small depth. Lucerne is growing luxuriantly on poultry farms adjoining the land referred to. The land is rather a heavy sand, with a deep yellow subsoil, and in some places limestone. The timber growing is jarrah, tuart, banksia, blackboy, and in some places bracken fern. I may say that after inspection of the site by the chairman and other members of the committee, the whole of the members submit the following facts in support: 1, That the land is of suitable nature, and is situated in the centre of thriving gardens and settlers. 2, That green stuff and grit—essential adjuncts to poultry raising—are obtainable cheaply and without undue labour. 3, That casual employment is available, and returned soldiers can expect sympathetic and kindly assistance from their neighbours. 4, That the area is well served with roads throughout, is within five miles' area of the City, and about one mile from tramway service and three miles from beach with macadamised road. My committee would be pleased for you and other members who are interested in the welfare of the returned soldier to pay this settlement a visit.

It will not be the fault of the land if the scheme is not a success.

This concluded the general debate on the Lands and Surveys Estimates; votes and items discussed as follow:—

Vote—Lands and Surveys, £46,131:

Item, Assistant to Under Secretary for Lands, £480.

Mr. BROWN: I would like to know what necessity there is for the new officer, at a salary of £480.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): Last year this officer was under the Industries Assistance Board. He has now returned to the Lands Department, which accordingly pays his salary this year.

Item, Extra clerical assistance, £2,000.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I had intended to question the item raised by the member for Subiaco. I understand the officer referred to is on leave in New Zealand.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): He has already returned and is absorbed.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: With regard to extra clerical assistance, the truism has been repeated here on divers occasions that in view of the falling off in land settlement extra clerical assistance in the Lands Department should show a substantial reduction. The Honorary Minister will agree that there has been a great dearth of land applicants. It

appears, however, that the expenses have not been reduced correspondingly.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): I quite agree with the member for Forrest that it looks as if expenditure were being piled up. But 70 men have gone from the Lands Department to the war, and in their places 39 temporary officers are being employed. That is the reason for the large amount for temporary assistance.

Item, Records clerks, £1,429.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: This item shows an increase of £101. Surely there is no occasion for increased expenditure on records. As regards officers who have enlisted, we were told the very same story last year. If £1,328 sufficed last year, that amount should suffice this year. I move—

“That the item be reduced by £100.”

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): Of the increase, £67 is due to the statutory increase of £12 per annum to married officers receiving less than £204 and single officers receiving less than £180. The remainder of the increase is due to the return of Mr. Arnold from the A.I.F. He has been absorbed by the department, and has to be provided with £71 to carry him through to the end of the financial year.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Item, Correspondence Clerks, £2,603.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is agreed that land settlement shows a considerable falling off. Then why this increase of £273 for correspondence? Apparently there is no reduction so far as clerical salaries are concerned. We cannot continually increase the cost of clerical work when there is no work to do. I move—

“That the item be reduced by £200.”

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): The increase is due to the transfer of Mr. Kidd from the deeds branch, and of Mr. Lamphree from the land selection branch, to the correspondence branch. There is really no increase; those two transfers account for £408.

Mr. O’Loughlin: Were those officers required in the correspondence branch?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): The item is reduced by the resignation of Mr. Upton, who had a salary of £120, and of Mr. Simmons, who joined the A.I.F., and was drawing a salary of £58. That makes the difference of £253. This is simply a case where officers have been transferred to a different item.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Item, Land selection clerks, £3,264.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Minister has just told us about two officers transferred to the correspondence branch, which brought about an increase of expenditure there. I move—

“That the item be reduced by £150.”

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): I admit that on the face of it, the vote looks alarming because it shows an increase, but I have already pointed out that the Estimates were printed some time ago. Since then great alterations have been made and the Esti-

mates could not be re-printed. The first two officers, Mr. Gibb and Mr. Cooper, were retired from the service. The latter unfortunately enjoyed his retirement for a few days only for he died recently. In this item there are 11 clerks at £204. That number should be seven. One officer has gone to the Repatriation Department, two others have been absorbed by the Accountant’s Branch, and another has gone to the Roads and Reserves. Altogether, therefore, the item instead of being made up of 18 officers, consists of 12.

Hon. P. Collier: You reduced this vote, but you excess another.

Amendment put and negatived.

Item, Inspection and Land Board, Clerks, etc., £754.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: What are the duties of the clerk who receives £216?

Item, Surveyor General, £425.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is the duty of the Surveyor General to fix the selling price of land. District surveyors, when surveying the land, classify it and price it, including these and many other particulars on their plans. Later the Surveyor General inspects those plans and adds the survey fees to the price of the land. The practice in the past has been for the Surveyor General to also state his opinion as to the value of the land. It has come under my notice that in many instances the Surveyor General has disagreed with the values placed on the lands by the district surveyors. In one or two instances, where a railway is proposed adjoining the land, the Surveyor General has increased the price. In a report published in the “Daily News” of a deputation which waited on the Honorary Minister (Hon. F. E. S. Willmott) on the 19th of last month, the Minister is stated to have said—

The Surveyor assesses the value of a block at 10s., but in the head office it is probably raised to 15s. or even £1 per acre. While I am in the office that position is not going to obtain. If the prices are raised in the head office I shall want to know the reason why.

I have examined a large number of classifications and prices, and I have certainly seen more blocks reduced than raised in the head office. I have seen the district surveyor’s assessment of land in the Lake Grace district reduced by 6s. per acre in the head office. I think a statement like that which is attributed to the Honorary Minister, if not true, should not be allowed to pass without contradiction. I have never known of a block of land valued at 10s. being raised to £1 in the head office. In my opinion the remarks of the Honorary Minister constituted a reflection on the late Surveyor General, a man highly respected by all who knew him. I have been informed that the report of the Minister’s remarks was incorrect. Still it has never been contradicted. In justice to the head office, statements such as I complain of should not be made.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): When I replied to that deputation I was speaking generally. As a matter of fact it had just then come under my notice that a district surveyor had priced a block



at 1s., and that the price was raised to 19s. in the head office. In my opinion the district surveyor, if he is fit to hold his position, should know better than the officers in the head office the real value of the land. If a district surveyor knows nothing of his work or of the locality of which he is in charge he is better out of that position, and should give way to another man who can price land at its true value instead of a fictitious one. I agree that in many cases around Lake Grace the price of the land was reduced in the head office, but my general statement is also correct.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You found one block.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): There was one block immediately under my eye at the time the deputation waited on me.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And you led us to believe that this was the general practice.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): There is a large number of blocks.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There is not.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): It is so, and they have come under my notice.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Honorary Minister should be careful in making a statement of this sort. There were many blocks which were reduced in price, but there have also been others which have been increased in price. A district surveyor does not always know what is going to happen in regard to railways, and is not expected to price lands except upon the knowledge he has. Naturally, the Surveyor General when dealing with the recommendations of a district surveyor must have regard to the later information in his possession. Improvements have often to be charged for, and there is also the question of interest. No two district surveyors are alike. Another thing to be borne in mind is that the value really placed on the land is the policy value and not the actual value. A district surveyor who has just been transferred to a new district cannot be expected to know it well until he has been there for some time.

Item, District Land and Survey Offices, Bridgetown, Narrogin, Northam, and Perth, £4,003.

Mr. FOLEY: I agree with the Honorary Minister that if inspectors and surveyors of the various land offices do not know what is a fair thing to charge for the land they should be put out in favour of other officers. But the Government have not put into effect the motion which was carried in this Chamber doing away with various land offices. The offices at Bridgetown, Narrogin, Northam, and Perth show an increase in every way. I would not object if the men in charge of these districts were competent to deal finally with applications. In what position is a man who applies for land at Northam? No application is finally approved until it has been dealt with at the head office. There must be very few applications for land in the Northam district, and if we computed the cost of running that office and set against this the number of

applications which came before it we would find that we were not receiving the full benefit for the expenditure. It should be possible to bring such officers in and place them in localities where they can do some work. One of the worst actions that has been committed by the Government lies in the reinstatement of the land offices at Narrogin, Northam, and other centres, after Parliament had decided that such offices should be done away with.

Mr. Smith: Especially when very little land is being selected.

Mr. FOLEY: That is so. If there is a surveyor employed who does not know his work he should make room for an officer who does, he should be sacked at a moment's notice. The Minister would do well to look into this question with a view to economy. I would favour centralising everything connected with this work, at all events for the present. Neither Northam nor Narrogin warrants just now the expense of a separate land office. The officers at those centres could be transferred to the head office, where they could render useful service. I contend the land officers should render exactly the same services to applicants as are rendered by private surveyors to clients.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): District offices now have their officers debited to them as they should be. Previously they were under different items. The same amounts appeared previously, but were not shown correctly—were, in fact, hidden. My policy, which has the Premier's approval, is to throw upon the district surveyors the full responsibilities of their districts. I consider that these officers should receive applications, make inspections, price the land, survey it, and leave nothing for the head office except the issue of formal approval. Then the district surveyors will be earning their money. But it is not possible for them to do the whole of the surveying, because they have also to attend to questions of roads and reserves. Roads and reserves are being surveyed every day of the week. Albany district has been amalgamated with Narrogin. Geraldton has been abolished as a district, and the greater portion of it included in Perth, the remainder being joined to the Northern district. A new district has been constituted taking in the pastoral areas.

Mr. Foley: How many applications for land have been made in the past three months?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): At the moment I do not remember, but the information was given here during the last fortnight, in reply to a question. Apart from such applications, there are a great many inquiries, most of which come to nothing. It is absolutely to the benefit of all concerned that the work of each district should as far as possible be so carried out as to reach finality in the district office. Suppose we had no district offices: what would it cost the State to send parties from Perth to make inspections and surveys for the numberless blocks scattered all over the South-West? The present exasperating delays are bad enough, but if everything is going to be centralised in Perth the delays will be a thousand times worse; indeed, applicants

would become so disheartened that they would simply clear out of the country.

Mr. Smith: How many people have applied for land in the Bridgetown district during the past six months?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): The necessity for the Bridgetown land office is proved by the fact that the Labour Government, who were out to economise in this respect, did not close that office.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: These offices transact a great deal of work, and if we are to prepare for the future they should remain active. We cannot conduct business under any scheme of centralisation. These districts cover a great area, and the duty of the district should be to see where all the land is and have it surveyed and prepared for settlement. Under centralisation this work cannot be done.

Vote put and passed.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.13 p.m.

## Legislative Council,

Thursday, 7th March, 1918.

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

### HARVEY IRRIGATION SCHEME, TO INQUIRE BY ROYAL COMMISSION.

#### Personal Explanation.

Hon. A. SANDERSON (Metropolitan-Suburban): My name appears on the Notice Paper as one of the suggested Commissioners for this proposed Harvey Royal Commission. I thanked the hon. member for having suggested my name at the time, or if I did not I will do so now; but I positively refused to go on the Commission, because I was quite satisfied that my opinion on the Harvey would be of very little value either to myself or to anyone else, and would carry very little weight. Having given the matter full consideration, I beg to request that my name should be removed from the list.

The PRESIDENT: Perhaps the hon. member will have it removed when we come to the Order of the Day.

### BILL—CURATOR OF INTESTATE ESTATES.

Report of Committee adopted.

### BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the previous day. Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair; the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 47—Amendment of Section 242j:

The CHAIRMAN: To this clause an amendment has been moved by Mr. Duffell to add at the end of the clause the following:—

(iii) By the deletion of the proviso in Subsection (1), and by inserting at the end the following new sections, to stand as 242jj and 242jjj:—242jj. (1) In the case of females the Commissioner shall, before taking any action under Section 242j, submit to an advisory committee, constituted as hereinafter mentioned, the evidence on which he proposes to take such action, and the said committee shall decide on the action, if any, to be taken by him. (2) The advisory committee shall be appointed by the Governor, and shall consist of four members. The Commissioner shall be chairman of the committee, but shall not be entitled to vote on any matter submitted to the committee. The remaining three shall consist of two females (one of whom shall be a duly qualified medical practitioner) and one male. The committee shall meet from time to time, when summoned by the Commissioner, and may make rules and regulations for the proper conduct of its business. All proceedings of the advisory committee shall be held in camera. 242jjj. It shall be lawful for a court established under the State Children Act, 1907, at any time either before or after committal of any child to order an examination to be made of such child by a duly qualified medical practitioner, either male or female, if there is reason to suspect that such child is suffering from venereal disease. In the event of the medical practitioner reporting that any child is so suffering, the court shall forthwith notify the Commissioner in writing, who may thereupon deal with such child as provided in subsections two to eight, inclusive, of Section 242j.

The question before the Committee is that the words proposed to be added be so added.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move an amendment on the amendment, as follows:—

That after "action" in line 5 of 242jj (1) the words "but without revealing the name of the person against whom such action is contemplated" be inserted.

I entirely approve of the suggestions of the select committee, and I may say that the members of that committee have assured me that they are quite in accord with my amendment. The only possible objection that could be raised against the proposal of the select committee to establish this advisory committee is that it might lead to more people than necessary being made acquainted with the name of the person against whom action is contemplated. There is no reason whatever why the