

I think it might be said that the commission will seek to purchase the power station, but it may be that the company concerned will not be prepared to sell. It might offer to lease the station to the commission. If the commission considers the leasing would not be satisfactory, or safe, taking the long view, it is given power to acquire the undertaking compulsorily. If the power station is purchased by the commission, no contract is to have any legal effect if the gross purchase price payable exceeds the sum of £100,000, unless the contract has been approved by the Governor. If the Collie power scheme has to be acquired compulsorily, the amount to be paid as compensation to the company is not to exceed the amount which would have been payable had the assessment of compensation been made on the 1st October, 1945. I think members will realise that it would not be desirable to fix a datum peg beyond the 1st October of this year. If any date further ahead were to be fixed, complications might easily develop; and those complications might create a lot of delay, and even involve the Government in expenditure which might not be warranted. Any additions made to the Collie power scheme after the 1st October this year are to be taken into consideration by the court in fixing the amount of compensation, provided the court is satisfied that any additions so made were not made for the purpose only of enabling the company to ask for an increased amount of compensation.

I think the Bill, in dealing with that very important matter, aims to treat the company and the shareholders of the company reasonably; and I am hopeful that the negotiations between the commission and the company, when they do take place, will be on a reasonably friendly basis, and that everybody concerned will take the wide view that what is being attempted by the commission on behalf of the Government is in the best interests of the South-West, and ultimately of the Great Southern district. I referred earlier to the increased development and progress which the establishment and operation of this proposed scheme is certain to bring to the South-West and, later on, to the Great Southern. I have emphasised the point that the provision of an efficient and

large electrical power generating plant should, to a large extent, precede development, as against being left to follow development as it takes place. In other words, the Government thinks that the provision of electric power, especially in the country districts, will be a great aid to industry already established and to its expansion, and a very great encouragement to the establishment of new industries, particularly manufacturing industries, for which we believe the South-West—and to some extent the Great Southern—is particularly suited. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Willmott, debate adjourned.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 2), £1,800,000.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

House adjourned at 8 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 23rd October, 1945.

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

BILL—SOIL CONSERVATION.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 17th October.

HON. G. B. WOOD (East) [4.34]: My remarks on this measure will be very brief. I have had an opportunity to study the Bill closely and have found in it little to which I take exception. I wish to compliment the experts who framed the Bill on the care and forethought they have displayed in dealing with the many questions involved. There are one or two clauses about which I am a little doubtful. It is proposed to give the soil conservation advisory committee very wide powers, not that it would be necessary in most cases to exercise such powers, but in the regulating of a farm it would be very

difficult for a committee of this sort to determine what was over-stocking or whether the land should be used for wheat, sheep or anything else. Over-stocking is the principal thing that concerns me because on a farm it varies so much. What might have been over-stocking last year would not be over-stocking this year, and I do not know how any committee could determine the point justly. The farmer himself cannot always decide.

A farmer might have carried too many sheep on his farm last year and might have been told that, on account of soil erosion, he must cut down the number this year, but in this year when the season is ever so much better, that farm would not be over-stocked. However, the committee is well-balanced and although the powers proposed to be conferred upon it are very wide, I believe it will exercise those powers discreetly. The whole question of soil erosion and its control is a matter that does not call for the penalties provided in the measure. The Bill, in fact, seems to be full of penalties. I consider it is rather a matter of educating and advising the farmers as to what it is best to do. I believe that Dr. Teakle is a man well versed in the subject of soil erosion, and if he is appointed commissioner, I think everybody will be well pleased.

The sooner the Bill is taken into Committee and we deal with the 40 odd clauses, the better it will be. I cannot see that any member here or in another place can reasonably object to its provisions. The Government has considered what has happened in other places and the Bill represents a genuine attempt to deal with the difficulty here. Still, I do not consider that any threat based on what has happened elsewhere was needed to bring home to members a realisation of the possibilities of soil erosion here. Something should be done to deal with the menace, and the Government has set out to do it under the provisions of this Bill. I support the second reading.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [4.38]: I should like to offer a few remarks on the Bill because this is experimental legislation and I am satisfied it will take some time to determine whether it will prove successful. As with the Closer Settlement Act Amendment Bill, we propose to give wide powers to the commissioner and to the advisory committee, who will find it necessary to be very

careful in any action they take to deal with soil erosion. Anybody travelling by ship up the coast of this State can see occurrences of soil erosion, particularly where cattle and stock generally have been moved along a boundary fence and where the trend of prevailing winds has been in the same direction. For instance, at the mouth of the Moore River, there is a stretch of country containing a great white patch that is really drift sand. The Moore River is constantly being silted up as the result of that sand drifting and the course of the stream is diverted in consequence. I would not care to be the owner of land there, and to be told by these authorities, "You are to do this, that, and the other."

This is a difficult problem to deal with. As one moves along towards Dirk Hartog Island one sees a band of white visible from miles out at sea. That is due to the same kind of wind action. These sand drifts occur all over the country. They can be seen in the wheatbelt. Soil drifts from cleared fields and can be seen in many places over the main road, sometimes 2 ft. or 3 ft. deep. On occasion, the sand has covered fences. On the whole, I do not think it is necessary to worry about this, because what is one man's loss is another man's gain. Tremendous falls of rain have carried a good deal of soil from my farm, and I have subsequently spoken to people on the Swan. I have said, "Tons of soil has been taken from our country, and you people must have benefited from that." One man said, "I have about 9 inches deposited on my flats on the Swan, and it has enriched my land tremendously."

Hon. F. E. Gibson: Some of it goes out to Rottnest.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: It is all carried back on the west coast. I could speak of a place where my grandfather built his own jetty at the mouth of Jurien Bay. There were no roads over which to cart supplies and everything was carried over the jetty that he erected. That jetty is now about half-a-mile away on dry land, which has been built up by the action of the sea. The sand has come in and left that jetty high and dry, and a great deal of the sand was probably the result of erosion in other portions of the country further inland. I presume that the same kind of thing is taking place all over the world. I do not know how the Red Sea

comes by its name, but it was probably derived from the rich red soil which is blown from one part of the continent to another.

It was my good fortune, about 60 years ago, to travel through the Red Sea. Although we were out of sight of land, we got into a dense fog. At least, it was presumed to be fog, and the vessel had to slow down and blow the fog-horn. That went on for some hours. Later in the afternoon, we saw that the fog consisted of red soil that had been blown from the shore. It was a very fine dust that eventually settled on the sea. The water did not absorb that soil; I suppose it was of an oily nature. In the afternoon we saw a strip of this soil on the sea, and the vessel had to drive through it. It was like a red road from one horizon to the other. I inquired of one of the officers what the line was. He said, "You young fool! Do you not know what that is? That is where the Children of Israel crossed over!" That was an instance of the soil drifting from one side of the sea to the other. There were many of those red roads; we went through others afterwards. That was due to the operation of the wind.

The same effect is to be observed on the Greenough Flats where soil is broken up to such an extent that I was informed some years ago by one man that it is not possible to fallow because the wind carries the soil away so freely. I suppose that is something which will interest the committee that is to be appointed under this measure. I foresee that the committee will experience difficulty in overcoming much of the soil drift. It will be fairly expensive to deal with, and there are many farmers who will be put to a fair amount of trouble if the problem is not carefully considered. However, the Government has made up its mind to tackle the question and see whether it can stop much of the water flowing freely and taking soil from many of our hills.

I have seen places where soil has been removed from country that has been ring-barked and cleared, and the removal of the soil has left barren rock. If we can obtain information to enable us to stop that, it will be a great help to many people who are witnessing the destruction of much of their country by soil erosion. This erosion is due to the operation of wind and water; probably wind action has

a greater influence in some places than has the rainfall. The same thing has been occurring on stations in the North. Whole rivers have been diverted. Pools that used to water some of the herds of the early settlers are non-existent today.

It is not a question of over-stocking. Stock travelled many miles inland away from the river and had to come back to the river to obtain water, and consequently made tracks and pads to the streams. Then, when the wind got to those tracks, or when a big rainfall was experienced, there was erosion and the watering pools were filled up. Attempts are to be made to prevent that from taking place. If they succeed, much benefit must result. However, when one starts dealing with Nature one faces many pitfalls. I support the second reading of the Bill, and I hope that when the measure becomes an Act, the experts will be able to tell us how to avoid many of the troubles that have been causing consternation amongst people who see damage being done to their properties.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West—in reply) [4.50]: I wish first of all to take this opportunity to express pleasure at the return of Hon. J. Cornell to this Chamber. He has been away ill for a considerable time, but I understand that he now feels well and fit to carry out his duties in this House. I hope that is so, and that he will soon be his normal self again. Turning to the Bill, I think members generally are convinced that legislation of this kind is necessary. Fortunately, we have the experience of other places to guide us as to the dangers of soil erosion, whether by wind or water, and we have knowledge of the successful efforts made elsewhere, not only to prevent further encroachment of this kind but, in some cases, to overcome it so successfully that land which for many years has been out of cultivation is today valuable and available for agricultural development. I believe the Government has done the right thing in bringing down the legislation at this juncture.

There will be many problems associated with the subject, problems perhaps peculiar to certain districts. The details will vary in different localities and I feel sure that the committee to be appointed under this Bill will be careful regarding its de-

cisions on those various problems. I think we have taken this action at the right time, before soil erosion has become as serious in Western Australia as it is elsewhere in the Commonwealth and in other parts of the world. I am pleased with the response that the Bill has received and I hope that when it becomes an Act the committee will be able to do all that the Government anticipates, and will be able to assist not only individual settlers but the various districts of this State which are showing such marked evidence of serious damage from soil erosion of one kind or another.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Before resuming my normal duties I desire to thank the Chief Secretary for his remarks, and to thank all members of the Council for the interest they took in my welfare during my absence. I wish particularly to thank the Deputy Chairmen for carrying on my job during my absence.

Clauses 1 to 21—agreed to.

Clause 22—Soil conservation districts:

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

That a new subclause be added as follows:—“(5) It shall be deemed to be a lawful excuse within the meaning of Subsection (4) of this section if the defendant proves to the satisfaction of the court hearing the complaint that he committed the act alleged in such complaint in the belief that such act was not unlawful, or for the reason that he did not possess and was unable to obtain the money necessary to enable him to carry out his obligations as required by or under the said regulations.”

When this Bill was being discussed in another place, the Leader of the Opposition questioned Subclause (4). It is, of course, necessary to see that the directions of the committee and the regulations that will be framed under this legislation are carried out, as far as possible, in their entirety, but it is also recognised that there may be genuine cases where the owner of the land is not fully aware of all the regulations and conditions applying. The Premier therefore agreed with the Leader of the Opposition that it would be just as well, perhaps, to

amend the clause in order to provide for such cases. The amendment that appears on the notice paper is now submitted in order to meet that position. I feel sure the Committee will agree to it.

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

Clause 23—agreed to.

Clause 24—Functions of regional advisory committee:

Hon. G. B. WOOD: No provision is made for the regional committee to obtain any expenses or remuneration. That committee will have a lot of work to do, perhaps more work than the general or central committee, and the Minister later on will invite members of the regional committee to go wherever it may be deemed advisable for them to go. I think some provision should be made for remuneration and expenses for the regional committee, and I would like the Chief Secretary to say something in that regard.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Whilst there is no specific provision in the Bill for the payment of remuneration to members of these particular committees, I can hardly imagine any member of a regional committee being put to expense without something being done by the advisory committee to meet the position.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: Adequate provision is made in the case of the central committee.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I imagine there will be men in the various districts prepared to give their time and work in serving on regional committees wherever necessary. If that work is greater than it is reasonable to expect I am sure there need be no fear as to what action will be taken. I do not think either the Government or the advisory committee would ask any person to carry out duties that would be costly to him without making some provision in that regard. I point out that there will be power under the Bill to make regulations to deal with this and other matters.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 25 to 27—agreed to.

Clause 28—Offences in relation to soil conservation reserves:

Hon. A. THOMSON: This clause gives the Minister power under paragraph (d) to prevent any person from placing cattle, horses or other animals on any soil conservation reserve. The penalty for an offence

is to be £50. What would be the position with regard to a farmer who allowed rabbits to stray from his property on to such reserves? Would he be obliged to erect a fence to prevent such a happening? Perhaps the Chief Secretary will obtain the views of the Crown Law Department on the matter. Should not the words, "or other animals" be struck out?

Hon. G. B. WOOD: Under the Vermin Act the onus is placed on the Minister to keep rabbits out of Government reserves.

Hon. A. Thomson: This clause does not contain any such provision.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I think we can take a risk in this case. If it were an offence on the part of a farmer to allow rabbits to stray on to one of these reserves it would also be an offence on the part of the Minister.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Thomson has no cause for alarm. This clause refers more to domestic animals than it does to vermin. To oblige the hon. member I will ascertain whether the construction he has placed on the clause is possible from the legal point of view.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 29—agreed to.

Clause 30—Leasing of land in soil conservation reserves:

Hon. A. THOMSON: Under this clause all revenue derived from leases and licenses shall be paid to the Treasury. This is akin to what happens to the profits of the Fremantle Harbour Trust, in which case all surplus revenue is paid into Consolidated Revenue and the trust borrows money for its requirements.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 31—Areas of erosion hazard:

Hon. A. L. LOTON: This clause contains these words "Where the Minister is of opinion that any tract of land is subject to erosion." In some districts after the land has been cleared the water has concentrated in one spot and in consequence of water erosion, the local authority has taken certain action that is detrimental to the interests of the farmer concerned. Is there any provision in the Bill to avoid placing the onus on the owner of the land in such circumstances?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The advisory committee will have power to deal with any instance of that kind. I have no doubt that

in cases where the action of a local authority is detrimental to a particular farmer sufficient authority will be found in this measure for the necessary action to be taken. A local authority would be foolish if it did not accept the advice that would be given in a case of this kind. Each problem will be dealt with as it arises.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: That is where the advice of a local man will be of value.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Regional committees will be of particular value in such instances. The basis of the Bill is co-operation between the landowner, the local authority, and the Government.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: In the past local authorities have gone ahead with certain work irrespective of what the individual thought, and it has been found necessary for action to be taken in a court when damages have risen. In some cases, I contend, the farmer was unfairly treated. I should like to see the position safeguarded.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 32 to 48, Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

BILL—CLOSER SETTLEMENT ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 17th October.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central) [5.14]: The parent Act was placed on the statute book in 1927 and I have often wondered why various Governments that have been in power since then have not made some endeavour to put the Act into force. I believe the principal reason is that the measure applied only to unutilised land. This amending Bill will alter that, and give the Government power to repurchase both unutilised land and land that is being utilised. Notwithstanding the views which have been expressed by members who, I think, have made a very close study of this question, I must say that since I have been a member of Parliament I have observed, while travelling over the Midland line and the Wongan Hills line, large areas of land adjacent to both railways that still remain in their virgin state. The land has been taken up and much of it fenced; but I am quite sure—because, especially during the first two years I was in Parliament, I made inquiries at the Lands Department

to ascertain whether any serious attempt was being made by the department to police the regulations under which all this land had been acquired—very little attempt has been made to comply with the regulations under which the land was taken up. The reason given by the department for the non-compliance with the regulations is that a large number of inspectors would be required to police them.

It is well known to members that the land of which I speak was taken up under what is known as conditional purchase leases and that it was incumbent upon the lessees to comply with the conditions, among which is one that the land shall be improved. I do not think there is any ambiguity about the improvements which must be effected—they are clearly set out—but in too many cases those provisions are a dead letter. Very little, if any, attempt is made by the people holding large areas of land adjacent to railways to comply with the provisions of the leases under which the land was taken up; and, as I said, little, if any, attempt has been made by the department to see that the conditions were complied with. It is the duty of the Lands Department to enforce the conditions of those leases, as it is the department which grants them. When lessees borrow money from the Agricultural Bank to assist them to effect improvements, the bank becomes interested and sends its inspectors to ascertain whether the improvements have been effected. I am referring now to land, taken up under conditional purchase leases, that has for too long been left in its virgin state, except perhaps that it has been fenced. As a consequence, other people desiring to acquire land have been forced further and further away from the existing railways. I maintain that is the reason why so many people in the wheatbelt have been unable to make a success of their operations; their costs have been considerably increased owing to their great distance from a railway.

Knowing that this amending Bill was coming before the House, I obtained some figures which I think will surprise members. These figures were compiled for me by the Mingenew Road Board. Let me say that I do not think the fact that land is served by a private railway is any reason why it should not be utilised in a way to benefit the State. The Mingenew Road Board informed me that it has 23 owners of land in its district hold-

ing 317,517 acres, of which 132,137 acres comprise first-class land within 16 miles of the Midland Railway. All the land is served by good roads. I said that area is held by 23 owners; of those 23 owners 17 hold 122,087 acres of first-class land, and on those areas there reside a total of about 54 persons.

It is stated by those who have a close knowledge of this district that a maximum of 3,000 acres would be quite sufficient for any one person. If the land were cut up and made available for closer settlement, there would be left a balance of 81,137 acres of first-class land for closer settlement, thus providing for an additional 27 holdings. I take into consideration the first-class land only; there is a balance of 185,380 acres which is not by any means useless. It is high time, therefore, that the Government gave consideration to a matter of very great importance to the primary production of this State, consideration that is long overdue.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Is not any use being made of this land?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I repeat it is of very great importance to the State, irrespective of whether the land referred to is served by a Government railway or by a private railway. What I take it we have in mind is to endeavour by every means at our disposal to increase the productivity of the State; and I maintain that that endeavour should be confined principally to land that is served by a railway. These people have a railway almost at their very doors.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Can you tell me whether most of it is being used?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: That is a very pertinent question.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: I want an answer.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: If the hon. member will please curb his youthful impetuosity, I shall endeavour to answer him. I am glad he asked the question. I am assured by people who have a close knowledge of this district that the land is not being utilised to anything like the extent that it should be. That is all I have to say in answer to the hon. member's very pertinent question. Is this land being utilised to its fullest extent? That will be difficult to decide. I say difficult, but it should not be so difficult if we adopt the very fine procedure set out in the Bill which has just passed this Chamber; that is, the Government should invite men with local experience to

assist it in arriving at a solution of what might be a very difficult question, namely, whether the land is being used to its fullest capacity.

We go a little further north. Some years ago a railway was built 46 miles north or north-east of Geraldton, the terminus being Yuna. Quite a large quantity of wheat has been grown along that line. I was visiting the district last week and obtained figures from the secretary of the Upper Chapman Road Board, within whose district the land is situated. For a distance of 36 miles from Geraldton there are 14 holdings which have been vacated—I will not say abandoned, because that would not entirely describe the position. The holdings were vacated for various reasons. The distance from the line varies from one mile to ten. We find in this good district a number of farms which have been not only fenced, but which have produced—I do not suppose I will be far out in making a rough guess—some millions of bushels of wheat.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Can you tell us why those properties are not being worked?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: My reply to that question is that conditions there have been hard. Of course, there was the depression, and I admit that the district has not been blessed with good seasons. It all comes back to what country members are continually saying in this Chamber, namely, that we cannot expect people to remain on their properties and to produce unless conditions are made easier for them.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Quite right, too.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Metropolitan members say exactly the same thing.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I am glad to hear it. The only thing is that country members come more closely into contact with that state of affairs, and perhaps the thought, which is a disturbing one, is ever present with them. How can we expect the railways to pay if they do not get the produce to transport?

Hon. L. B. Bolton: The Midland Railway is the only one that does pay.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: In a distance of 36 miles, 14 farms have not actually been abandoned but the owners, or the people working them, have left. These farms are leased, mostly for grazing purposes. The total area of these 14 properties is 24,844 acres and they are at a distance of from

one to ten miles from a railway. Further out we have another 14,431 acres, at a distance of from 16 to 26 miles from a railway, originally held by six holders, and those blocks also have been vacated. Notwithstanding what I have heard in this Chamber regarding the difficulty of getting people to take up land, one of the reasons why we have had failures when we might have had successes is that successive Governments have done nothing to compel people who own land close to the railways to utilise it fully. So it is high time that the Government awakened to this matter and endeavoured to do something to keep the people on their holdings to produce the primary products that we so much need. I shall support the second reading with great pleasure.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [5.32]: When one makes a retrospect of the Closer Settlement Act one can come to only one conclusion, that the purpose of this Bill is to provide some machinery for the resumption of land for ex-servicemen.

Hon. A. L. Loton: That is only one of its purposes.

Hon. J. CORNELL: It cannot be any other. It is 18 years or more since the Closer Settlement Act was agreed to. There are a few members present, you, Mr. President, included—I think you were Chairman of Committees at the time—who will recollect that it was one of the most closely contested Bills that ever went through this House. It was amended time after time. The chief protagonist was our dear old friend, the late Hon. J. Nicholson. That Act has not been given effect to. Although it was on the statute book, much unutilised land held by private persons in good localities was not resumed under its provisions but, on the contrary, men were settled 60 miles from a railway. All that country known as the Lakes area, which contained some 450 settlers, was settled after the passage of the Closer Settlement Act.

That is one of the tragedies of this State. That being so, I can form only one conclusion, that the object of this Bill is to amend the Closer Settlement Act so as to permit of an invasion, for the purpose of soldier settlement, into land held today. It cannot be for any other reason. I am only dealing

with the objects and purposes of the Bill. Whether the measure will serve its purpose time alone will tell. The ex-serviceman is rather effectively settled so far as land settlement is concerned. He is like Mahomet's coffin, in a splendid state of suspended animation. There is an agreement between the States and the Commonwealth. We are one of the mendicant States for the purpose of rehabilitating some of these ex-servicemen on the land. That agreement was arrived at between three States—I am leaving out the three major States which can and are going ahead because they are not under the aegis of the Commonwealth—and the Commonwealth, and yet the Commonwealth Parliament has adjourned for a long recess without in any way implementing it.

Whether this State intends to bring down a ratifying Bill to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for the Commonwealth, I have yet to learn. There should be simultaneous ratifying legislation passed by the States and the Commonwealth. If this Bill is for the purpose that I say it is—that is, to resume land for soldier settlement; and I do not think it can be for anything else—we will have this state of affairs: We shall probably resume freehold land for which a fee simple has been given probably, in some cases, 50 years ago to the holder. If we are going to give that land to the ex-serviceman, we shall have to give it to him on a perpetual basis. I heard a senior official of the Lands Department say that the Western Australian soldier could fight to hold his country, but was not allowed, on his discharge, to own any of it. With these few remarks, I will support the second reading of the Bill because I think it is necessary, and all machinery possible should be available for the rehabilitation of servicemen on the land. One of the members of this board is to be Mr. Fyfe, who has the confidence of the returned soldiers of this State. Wherever he could possibly help he has done so, and he has taken the soldier into his confidence.

HON. G. B. WOOD (East) [5.40]: I support the Bill because it is part and parcel of the rehabilitation scheme to settle returned soldiers on the land. It provides for something that I very much dislike, namely, the right of the Government to in-

spect and later resume land that is already being used. I think that is very dangerous. Mr. E. H. H. Hall has told us about large tracts of land on the Midland line that are not being used. I know of large tracts in other places that are not being utilised. Surely it should be right and proper for the Government to see about taking some of that land before it resumes land that is already used. Mr. Roche spoke about large stud farms. I know of places that are not stud farms but where a wonderful job is being done in the production of fat lambs, wheat and wool. It would be highly improper to give those places to inexperienced soldiers. I can call to mind many such properties that are today carrying sheep to their full capacity, and growing as much wheat and oats as possible. In addition, they are supporting numbers of married couples whose houses are scattered about the farms. I, for one, would not be a party to giving the Government power to inspect and take away these places.

Hon. H. Seddon: You will if you pass this Bill.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I do not intend to vote for the Bill as it stands. It is not necessary to give these powers to the Government. We know that the production of lambs has gone down considerably lately. If we put inexperienced soldiers on the developed properties I have mentioned we will certainly not go forward. On the other hand, if we take unutilised lands and put them into production we shall considerably increase the output of Western Australia. I do not suggest placing returned soldiers on land that has no clearing or improvements at all. There is much partly-cleared land that can be turned into ready-made farms for the soldiers.

I saw what happened after the 1914-18 war, with the hopeless over-capitalisation of the work of the returned soldier. We do not want that repeated. I do not want to be misunderstood. I do not want anything like that. It is not proper, however, for highly productive farms, supporting many people, to be taken from those holding the land. It may be said that the Government will not use this privilege, but it is included in the Bill. I hope the measure will be amended so that the Government will have all the necessary power—if it is not already contained

in the 1927 Act—to turn unutilised land into ready-made farms for the soldiers. With that reservation, I support the second reading.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [5.45]: I support the second reading of the Bill because I regard the legislation as essential. It will mean the application of the provisions of the Closer Settlement Act in a manner that will remedy the deficiencies of the past. I am speaking mostly with respect to the areas in the province I represent because I do not profess to have knowledge of any large unused farming areas in other parts of the State. On the other hand, I can safely say that the number of large unused properties in the South-West Province is fewer than may generally be imagined. I am strongly of opinion that properties in that category should not be allowed to continue as at present, and as they have continued for many years past. The areas I have in mind include land of a type on which we could put returned soldiers, many with a little experience and even some with none at all, with some hope of success.

Hon. T. Moore: Surely not men without experience!

Hon. W. J. MANN: My first-hand acquaintance with matters appertaining to group settlement, extending from Peel Estate to Nornalup, has taught me that it is absolutely fallacious to even dream of putting men on virgin country and expecting them, for at any rate a good many years, to make a living from their properties. We have in this State land that is equal to anything to be seen elsewhere in the Commonwealth but on our best and most fertile land we could not possibly expect a man to make his holding productive to the extent of adequately keeping himself and his family, inside ten or 15 years. Even to accomplish that end within the period I mention, a man would have to work fairly hard. I am strongly of the opinion that if soldier settlement activities after this war are to be confined to land that is suitable, partly improved, close to railway and other facilities and to the various amenities of agricultural life, we will be assured of success; otherwise, we will merely have a repetition of the spectacle we had after the 1914-18 war.

Hon. G. B. Wood: There is plenty of that type of land available without the necessity for resumptions.

Hon. T. Moore: Where?

Hon. W. J. MANN: I have in mind areas that I consider suitable for a man to make a living from his work within a reasonable time, without his heart being broken as we saw so many times in the past on the heavy forest land. I think the available area of such land is not very extensive, but what land there is should certainly be used to the fullest extent. I do not know of any justifiable reason that could be advanced for allowing such properties to remain unutilised. I know of some areas on which the owners of the properties run a few head of stock occasionally merely, as they say, for a change. In a couple of instances I know, the people own two properties; they reside on one block and change their stock over to their second property from time to time.

I doubt very much whether that could be regarded as making use of the second property to the extent that that would be considered adequate. The holdings are certainly used but they are close to railway facilities and in those circumstances should come within the purview of the committee that is to be appointed to inspect properties under this legislation. I am not speaking of coastal blocks. Many dairymen and stockowners have blocks of coastal country, but those areas are many miles from centres of settlement and, for the time being at any rate, are beyond the scope of closer settlement legislation. I am glad that the Bill includes a provision whereby an aggrieved owner may appeal to a judge of the Supreme Court. I think that is perfectly just. If a man is of opinion that he is adequately utilising his property, he will be given an opportunity to substantiate his claims on appeal.

Hon. G. B. Wood: But is not the procedure suggested the wrong way about?

Hon. W. J. MANN: I do not think so. I think it is correct for the State to tell a man whether or not he is doing a fair thing with his land. I acknowledge that the State should be just and reasonable in dealing with such matters.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Should not the committee prove that the man had not done the right thing?

Hon. W. J. MANN: I assume that if it were to take action, the committee would indicate to the owner that it was of opinion that his land was not being utilised fully; otherwise the committee would not take any action. It would know from the start that its decision could be upset on appeal to the judge. I think that the provision in the Bill is reasonable and quite in order. I have nothing more to say about the measure beyond expressing the hope that this effort to settle some of our returned men in the rural areas will prove very successful.

I trust that the Government and those in authority will be just a little more kindly disposed to the newcomers than was apparent in the early days of group settlement. There is ample room for improvement in that direction. I express my pleasure at the inclusion of the Director of Land Settlement as a member of the committee. I have known Mr. Fyfe for many years. As a surveyor he was for years in and out of the areas I know best, and for his judgment I have the highest regard. I cannot visualise Mr. Fyfe recommending a man to go on to a block where he was not sure that the settler would have an excellent chance of success. He has seen so many tragedies and knows land settlement matters as well as any individual in this State. He appreciates the capacity of holdings, climatic conditions and other factors that make for success. I am sure his appointment is fully justified.

Hon. J. Cornell: In effect, this Bill repeals the 1927 Act.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West—in reply) [5.55]: I feel sure that the House will agree to the second reading of the Bill, but one or two questions have been raised during the debate to which I think I should reply before we consider the measure in Committee. In the first place, more than one member remarked that in his opinion the 1927 Act should be quite sufficient to meet the requirements of the present situation.

Hon. W. J. Mann: It is not.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: In that connection I was very pleased to hear Mr. Cornell remark that when the original legislation was passed by this Chamber it was the subject of a very heated debate. If members care to look up the "Hansard" report of the proceedings on that occasion,

they will find that the provisions of the measure were so hedged round with restrictions that the Bill in its final form was hardly of any use at all. When the measure left this Chamber it set out that its provisions should apply only to unutilised land. It went further and required in effect, that the owner of such land should be given an opportunity to utilise his property before the area could be regarded as available for resumption. I ask any member of this Chamber who has any knowledge of agricultural land, just how far one would be likely to get with legislation of that description? First of all, it had to be proved that the land was unutilised; secondly, the owner had to be given an opportunity to utilise the land.

Hon. T. Moore: If he put a few kangaroos on the property, it would be all right.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: We have had a slight diversion regarding vermin, but I do not think that it applies to this Bill. I ask members seriously how far it would be possible for any Government or any department to deal with land that is only partly utilised and certainly not utilised to the fullest possible extent, is not producing all that could be expected of it and is not providing a living for as many people as it should—if we had to continue operating under the 1927 Act? The Bill now goes further and, in a way, seeks, as Mr. Cornell suggests, to repeal, to a certain extent, the 1927 Act.

The measure under discussion deals with any land, not merely unutilised land. If it can be shown that land is not being utilised to its fullest extent, is not productive to its fullest capacity and is not carrying the number of people that could be expected, then the Bill will enable action to be taken for the resumption of the area. Action with a view to resumption is not to be taken until such time as the owner has had an opportunity to agree to the price offered for his property. He will be able to appeal not only against the price offered to him but against the actual act of resumption. If he can convince the court that he is using his holding in a reasonable way, no action for resumption will take place. The Government will be faced with the problem of placing thousands of returned men on the

land and is anxious to secure suitable properties with that objective in view. The Government desires to avoid the mistakes that some members have referred to in connection with the earlier group settlement activities.

The only way in which those mistakes can be avoided is, in my opinion, to utilise available land in areas that are served by railways and roads and are provided with water supplies and all other amenities and facilities applicable to rural life. If we are to be successful with the land settlement project on this occasion, power to deal with areas of land that have been referred to during the debate, is a first essential. We must have power to acquire land where it is positively certain that the holdings are not developed to their fullest extent and not utilised as they could be. We know that it is necessary to take over blocks that have been hardly touched, from the point of view of development.

Hon. G. B. Wood: We all agree with that.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Then members generally must be in agreement with the Bill in principle, at any rate.

Hon. T. Moore: This House did not agree on the last occasion.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: If there has been a change in the House, so much the better for the department and for the men seeking land under the soldier settlement scheme. Several other points were raised during the debate, the first with which I shall deal by Mr. Roche. He referred particularly to fairly large properties that are used for the breeding of stud sheep and he was a little anxious to know whether, because a large area was involved and it might be said that the land was not being put to the fullest possible use, mainly because it was being used for stud purposes, there would be authority to resume the land under this measure. My reply is that there would be authority under this measure to resume the land if the circumstances were such that it should be resumed, but may I point out that this Government has a full recognition of the value of stud farms and that the Director of Land Settlement and his colleagues also have a full knowledge of the value of such properties?

The hon. member need not be afraid that there will be any danger of resumption where a property is being reasonably utilised for stud purposes. If the committee were of the opinion that the area was not being used as fully as it might be, there would have to be negotiations between the committee and the owner of the property, and he would have the right to determine whether he could utilise the land to a greater extent than it was already being used. There is a right of appeal in the event of action being taken and the owner's not agreeing to it. In such cases we must have regard to the men who will have authority to deal with these matters. If we are satisfied that the men forming the committee can be trusted to do the right thing, that is all we want. I know of one or two properties being used for stud purposes, and I say without any hesitation at all that they are filling a more useful purpose for the State than they would be doing if they were cut into smaller holdings and were producing something other than stud sheep. That is the main point which was raised by Mr. Roche.

Hon. H. L. Roche: What about the valuations?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member suggested that on account of National Security Regulations dealing with the sale of land, under which prices have been pegged as at 1942 values, it would not be fair, in many instances, for the State to resume land under such conditions. As a matter of fact, the National Security Regulations do not apply where the State or the Commonwealth is involved in the purchase of land. Therefore the hon. member may rest assured that any negotiations which take place with the owners of such properties, if there are any, will not be subject to the regulation of 1942, and if the owner is not satisfied with the price offered to him, he has arbitration to fall back on and, in addition, the right of appeal.

Hon. A. Thomson: Except that the State might want to take over the land at taxation value.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Perhaps so, but the owner of the land would still have the right of appeal, and in view of what I have already said that any property involved is not likely to come within the purview of this measure unless it complies with the other conditions with regard to utilisation, production, and the number of peo-

ple living on the property, I do not think the owner would have much to complain of if he has the right to go to arbitration and, on top of that, the right of appeal.

Another question raised by Mr. Roche was whether single-men properties—properties which would carry only one family—could be resumed under this measure. This Bill is one to bring about closer settlement, and there would be no point in taking one man off a property in order to put another man on it. Therefore the hon. member has nothing to fear in that direction. There might be some small properties carrying one family at present that might be more suitable for perhaps two or even three families, but there again we would have to rely upon the good sense of the Director of Land Settlement and the committee working with him. I cannot imagine Mr. Fyfe's deciding that a certain property occupied by one family should be resumed for the purpose of cutting it into two properties in order to put two families on that area without allowing the original owner to occupy one part of it. Even so, it is a point unlikely to arise. If it can be shown that the area has not been fully utilised and that, without inflicting any hardship upon the owner, it might be subdivided and utilised for more than one family, why should it not be so utilised? As I have already pointed out, the owner will have the right to object to the resumption; he will have the right to utilise the whole of the land and, if he does so, there can be no danger at all of any resumption taking place. Like many other statutes of a similar kind, much will depend upon the administration of this measure, and I believe that in Mr. Fyfe as Director of Land Settlement, we have a man who may be relied upon to do the fair thing.

Members: Hear, hear!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Fyfe is a man who knows his business, and I believe he has the respect of every section of the community with which he has come into contact over the years.

Hon. A. Thomson: Without doubt you have the right man.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Another point raised was the question of putting returned soldiers on land that is undeveloped. One of the mistakes after the first World War was mentioned by Mr. Mann in relation to the group settlement scheme—the fact that we put men on undeveloped areas

and broke their hearts before it was possible for them to make a living. Members are aware that, by agreement between the State and the Commonwealth, an entirely different arrangement is being put into effect on this occasion.

Hon. J. Cornell: Will you inform the House whether land resumed under the amending measure will be disposed of under Section 13 of the principal Act?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Not necessarily so.

Hon. J. Cornell: That practically provides for the disposal of freehold.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Before the end of the session, legislation will be placed before the House dealing with the agreement between the Commonwealth and the State on the matter of soldier land settlement.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Have you reached finality with the Commonwealth?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Practically. Under that agreement, I do not think there will be much difficulty in satisfying the returned soldiers who acquire land under this measure. Whether returned soldiers settle on the land that is resumed under this measure or whether it is Crown land, no matter what land it might be, the great point is to ensure that within a reasonable time they will have a reasonable opportunity to make a living, will not be over-capitalised and will be located in districts where there is a reasonable opportunity for a man, provided he is suitable, to utilise his holding to the best possible advantage.

Hon. A. L. Loton: It will be of no use returned soldiers' raising produce unless there are markets for it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: This Bill has nothing to do with markets, but if we utilise land already served by roads and railways and other amenities, the soldier settler will have just as good an opportunity as have the men already on the land in those areas.

Hon. A. Thomson: And better than men 50 miles out.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes. If we obtain the authority sought under this Bill, we shall be able to do far better for returned soldier settlers than would otherwise have been possible. I have informed the House on more than one occasion this session of the steps being taken by Mr. Fyfe as Direc-

tor of Land Settlement and of the number of holdings already taken in hand, many of which have been reconditioned. Those holdings will be made available to soldier settlers at a price that will be determined beforehand and will enable them to make a living, provided they are prepared to utilise the holdings in a proper manner. I need not deal with other points that have been raised during the debate. In Committee doubtless a number of other interesting and important matters will be brought forward and I shall do my best to deal with them as they arise.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. V. Hamersley in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—New sections:

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I suggest that the Chief Secretary report progress at this stage to give us an opportunity to put amendments on the notice paper.

The Chief Secretary: I agree.

Progress reported.

BILL—MINE WORKERS' RELIEF (WAR SERVICE) ACT AMENDMENT.

Assembly's Further Message.

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to the further amendment made by the Council to its original amendment No. 1.

House adjourned at 6.15 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 23rd October, 1945.

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QUESTIONS.

INSECTICIDE.

As to Investigation of D.D.T.

Mr. OWEN asked the Minister for Agriculture:

1, Has the department carried out full investigations into the use of D.D.T. as an insecticide to control insect pests of plants and animals?

2, If so, what have been the results and what is the recommended strength of D.D.T. to use?

3, Will the result of any work done in this direction be made public, and if so when?

4, Do any of the proprietary preparations now offered for sale contain D.D.T.?

5, Have these preparations been thoroughly tested by the department, and if so, with what results?

The MINISTER replied:

1, Yes.

2, The strength of D.D.T. used in these experiments has been 1 per cent. in dust and 0.1 per cent. in solution. No injury to plants has been observed.

3, Recommendations will be made public as soon as the work is sufficiently conclusive and after consultation with officers of the C.S.I.R. with whom the department is co-operating.

4 and 5, No proprietary preparations have been registered yet at the department as containing D.D.T. There is considerable information at the Agricultural Department that will be made available to the hon. member upon inquiry.

PULVERISED COAL.

As to Use by Railways.

Mr. ABBOTT asked the Minister for Railways:

1, Has he any information as to whether—(a) Pulverised coal is solely used by the railways of Brazil with excellent results? (b) This method of firing railway engines with Colliery coal would result in increased economy and decrease bush fire risk?

2, If the answer to question 1, (a) or (b) is in the negative will he have inquiries made with a view to ascertaining whether it would be of advantage to introduce such a system in the Western Australian Government Railways?

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