

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I wish to avoid having to register, as I do not keep bees. I do allow the bees belonging to another man to remain on my land, and I want to know if I am obliged to register as a bee keeper?

The CHAIRMAN: I would point out that no amount is set down as the cost of registration.

Hon. G. Fraser: I have not proposed a registration fee.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I am advised that as President of the Kings Park Board I am the legal occupier of land, in this case, of land on which wild bees swarm. I am, therefore, liable to be called upon to register.

The MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES: I have here an opinion from the Crown Law Department to the effect that the definition of "bee keeper" requires that bees must be kept, that is to say, retained on the land of the bee keeper. Bees can only be kept or retained if they settle in some receptacle where they can be confined or controlled. Insofar as wild bees cannot be detained or controlled, it can hardly be contended that any person would be held to be a bee keeper who had wild bees on his property. It must be shown that the bees are kept on the land in such manner that they are under control.

Hon. G. Fraser: Whether this clause is passed or not, the definition of "bee keeper" is still retained in the Bill.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: If a person can be defined as a bee keeper, as suggested by Mr. Hamersley and Mr. Lovekin, it may be necessary carefully to examine what this definition means. Wild bees usually live in hollow trees. If a person has bees on his property, he may be deemed to be a bee keeper within the definition of the Act, and may be bound to register.

Hon. G. Fraser: He registers only if he has an apiary.

The MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES: Does Mr. Nicholson think any court would hold that wild bees can be regarded as within the keeping of any person?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: That would depend upon the construction placed on the definition. An apiary means any place where bees or bee keepers' appliances are

kept. The definition could be made clear on the recommittal of the Bill.

New clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

*House adjourned at 10.15 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Tuesday, 14th October, 1930.*

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

### QUESTION—SHEARERS' STRIKE.

#### *Police Precautions.*

Mr. HEGNEY asked the Minister for Police: 1, Has there been any increase in the number of police stationed at Yalgoo, Mt. Magnet, Wubin, and Goomalling? 2, If so, what is the reason for the increase? 3, How many police are engaged in escorting men in connection with work in shearing sheds? 4, How many special constables have been sworn in since 1st September, 1930? 5, Who is paying for the services of the extra police? 6, If the State is paying, what has been the cost to date?

The MINISTER FOR POLICE replied: 1, 2 and 3, The police have been sent to various centres on the Murchison to meet circumstances that have arisen in connection with the shearers' strike. 4, Special constables have been appointed by local magistrates under the powers conferred on them by Section 34 of the Police Act, 1892. 5 and 6, No payment has been made by the Government.

## PRIVILEGE—PARLIAMENTARY OFFICERS.

### *Appointment of Temporary Clerk Assistant.*

**HON. W. D. JOHNSON** (Guildford-Midland) [4.34]: Before the Orders of the Day are called, I would like, on a question of privilege, to make a brief statement on the subject of the discussion that took place in the House following upon your statement, Mr. Speaker, with regard to a slight alteration, or re-arrangement, of the staff of the Legislative Assembly, to meet special circumstances. I did propose, and you were kind enough to agree, that under privilege I should move a motion to further ventilate the matter. After consideration, I deemed it advisable to discuss the matter with your good self. This I did, and I wish to inform hon. members that personally I am satisfied that the present position is of a purely temporary character, and that should any permanent appointment have to be made at some future date, the interests of the staff of this House will be properly respected. That is all I desire to say, and I am content to let the matter rest at that.

## BILL—EDUCATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

## BILL—STIPENDIARY MAGISTRATES.

Report of Committee adopted.

## ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1930-31.

### *In Committee of Supply.*

Resumed from the 9th October; Mr. Richardson in the Chair.

*Vote—Railways, Tramways and Electricity Supply, £3,544,000 (partly considered):*

**HON. W. D. JOHNSON** (Guildford-Midland) [4.38]: When we arrive at the Railway Estimates, we reach what I consider to be the main part of the Estimates to be dealt with. The railways constitute the main factor in the State's financial stability. The railways, in my opinion, are the truest indicator of the progress and

prosperity of the State. The goods train is the direct carrier of the State's productions and, therefore, the number of goods trains operating over the railways is the true indication of the wealth of the State as evidenced by production, and production influencing the number of goods trains operating. Then it can also be said equally truly that the excursion train is the true indicator of the State's prosperity. If there are a large number of goods trains running, then we find they are intermixed with various excursion trains. If each form of train is well patronised, it can be said that the State is prosperous and progressive. On the other hand, we also have to realise that just as the number of goods trains is reduced, so the excursion trains are limited in these times. To-day it can be said that goods trains are few, and excursion trains have practically gone out of use. We can recall a few years back when we had numerous excursion trips organised to enable people to visit various parts of the State, particularly the wheat belt, for the purpose of viewing for themselves the wonderful expansion and productive character of our wheat areas. To-day one would not dream of sending an excursion train through the wheat belt because the people cannot afford to patronise trains of that description. Yet the fact remains that the wheat belt to-day would provide far greater evidence of prosperity, from the standpoint of production, than at any other time, so far as my judgment goes, in the history of the State. The whole countryside is responding, comparatively speaking, to its maximum extent. Our wheat land is responding magnificently, and the crops are wonderful. I do not say that they are uniformly good, but, generally speaking, they are good, although some are better than others. I do not know of any other time when it could be said that, generally speaking, the production of the State was higher than it is to-day. It would be a fine thing for Western Australia if our prosperity would permit us to run excursion trains on the basis of patronage available, so that the people of the metropolitan area could see what can be done with our wheat land, provided Providence is kind in supplying rain during the growing period. I said that our railways represent the main factor in indicating the position of the State. That is really the position when we make a comparison with our total loan indebtedness. The railways account for roughly

about one-third of the total indebtedness of the State, or, in other words, our railways must produce interest on at least one-third of our total indebtedness if we are to be financially sound. The actual indebtedness of the State totals £70,174,350, and of that amount, £24,039,798 is invested in our railways. The Minister may say that the actual figure is £23,000,000, but I would remind him that there is a floating amount of £424,000 that is provided by the Treasury for the purchase of rolling stock, upon which interest has to be paid. Therefore, the railways are directly responsible for the payment of interest on £24,000,000. In those circumstances, it can be said that the success or otherwise of our railways is indicative of the position of Western Australia. If our railways are operating profitably, and are able to meet the full financial liability, then it can be said that the position of the State is fairly sound and even buoyant. To obtain that result and carry the enormous burden of capitalisation, we must have efficiency and enthusiasm in the management and running of the railways. I say the management and the running because the management generally comprises the heads of branches, whereas the running is carried on by the rank and file, and unless we have enthusiasm from top to bottom, we cannot obtain that efficiency essential to guarantee true earning capacity. Our railways are relatively well managed. By relatively I mean as compared with the railways in other parts of Australia. I am prepared to go to the extent of saying I believe our railways are the best managed railways in Australia. I have no complaint about the general management. I believe the appointment of the present Commissioner was the best thing in the interests of the State. He brought experience and knowledge to bear upon the task, he organised his staff in such a way as to get the maximum results from them, and my travelling over various portions of the system convinces me that the rank and file are enthusiastic in their work, anxious to serve the public and assist the State by increasing the earning capacity of the railways. It is necessary that the management should keep closely in touch with all phases of State development and activity. I do not think the heads of the

department are encouraged to a maximum extent to keep in touch with various discussions regarding State development generally. I would encourage the Commissioner and his staff to keep closely in touch with the Chamber of Manufactures, and actually to take part in the discussions of the Chamber of Commerce and to gain information from all who can speak with knowledge of the State's activities. The Minister's speech indicated a general recognition of the great importance of the railway system to the State from a financial point of view. I am pleased with the Government's activity regarding unfair motor competition. I agreed with the Bill introduced by the Minister for Works to increase the impost upon motors unfairly competing with the railways, and I also endorsed the remarks of the Minister regarding his ambition to ensure that competition is placed on a more equitable basis. To the fostering of road transport, as it has been fostered in recent years, I have always been opposed. I have tried to discourage expenditure on main roads. I have never been able to see that it was economically sound to continue the construction of main roads that would permit of competition with the railways, and I have strenuously opposed the Federal aid roads scheme as being of no economic advantage to the State. I would go so far as to say I have always regarded that scheme as an economic disadvantage. The pound given by the Commonwealth Government and the 15s. we had to contribute would have been better spent had we used our 15s. as we considered best in the interests of the State, leaving them their pound, rather than giving them an opportunity to dictate not only how we should spend their pound, but also how and where we should spend our 15s. The reason I have always opposed the construction of main roads paralled with or close to railways was because it deliberately encouraged the use of motor cars and motor trucks in competition with the railways. I claim that the use of motor cars and trucks is economically unsound unless we encourage the introduction of increased population as well as increased motors. The motor car is of no advantage to the State unless it brings into the State its carrying capacity in the shape of human beings. If every motor car

that came here with a carrying capacity of five people brought into the State the five people it could carry, the State could go on building roads on which the car might operate. When we, limited in population, and already over-burdened in regard to the maintenance of our railways, call upon the same number of people to build roads to permit of competition with the railways, I regard it as a suicidal policy, and have always viewed it as such. If the motor car brought population with it, we would have additional people over whom to spread the burden, but without increased population the burden becomes impossible.

Mr. H. W. Mann: And it is more so today.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The tax on motor cars and petrol could never compensate for the losses we were incurring in other directions by the use of motor cars in competition with the railways. I have quoted the instance of the main road from Perth to Northam. I do not know what was spent on that road, but it was constructed and reconstructed. To my knowledge we spent £30,000 to £40,000 on that road, but it did not increase the prosperity of the State. Northam, and all it has, has been obtained and maintained by railway communication. Northam was built up, its lands developed, its people settled, and its population established by railway communication. The construction of a road at that huge cost has been of no advantage to Northam. The population of Northam has not increased; possibly it has decreased. Unless we, by such expenditure, can increase the population that any given portion of the State can maintain, it is economically unsound to continue it. When we realise that the construction of the Perth-Northam-road was a direct penalty against the State's investment in railways, we can only view it as a disastrous policy. Another matter that is receiving special attention is that of developmental railways. Railways have been constructed in Western Australia at a rapid rate as compared with the growth of population. I am of opinion that our railway construction got out of hand just as much as did our main roads construction. Railways were constructed a few years ago at the rate of a mile for every 100 people. It is remarkable how closely we kept to that proportion for a number of years. It might vary to 99 or 101 people to the mile,

but it has been round about one mile to every hundred people for many years. The fact of the figures standing at that rate for so long is an indication that our population has not increased proportionately to anticipations when the railways were constructed. Increased railways have not brought increased settlement to any great extent. The number of people on the land has increased, but the railway mileage, compared with that increase, has not improved matters financially. We cannot continue to build developmental railways out of proportion to the population. We have to increase the number of people on the land already served by railways before we can build any more lines.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Half the population is in the metropolitan area.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: That might be so, but much of the population of the metropolitan area could and would be scattered throughout the agricultural districts if the land already served by railways were made available to them. We have decided upon the area of land that a railway will serve. Parliament has endorsed it over and over again, that 20 miles of territory would be served by a railway, so that the carting distance would be 20 to 25 miles. I am prepared to admit that that distance can be and has been increased by the use of motor trucks. Whether motor transport is economical, I question very much. I think it would have been better for this country had there been no motor trucks, and had we maintained our railway construction to serve 25 miles of territory. While we have laid it down that a railway will serve a given area of country, we have never insisted that a given population should be settled on that area before embarking upon additional expenditure. We have built railways with a total disregard of the number of people who utilised them. The land served by one railway has not been settled before another railway has been either constructed or placed under construction. Consequently, railway construction has got out of hand, and today we are attempting to carry a burden that is impossible for our population. The time has arrived when we should make a complete stocktaking of the carrying and productive capacity of the land adjacent to existing lines. I am opposed to incurring any additional capitalisation until we know what can be done with the unimproved lands in large areas both along existing lines and

along the routes of lines under construction. The Minister for Lands is opening up a new area for settlement. I am quite opposed to that. It is economically unsound and there is no need to continue with that development. Ample land adjacent to existing railways is already awaiting settlement. There is no necessity to launch out in this way and cause increased expenditure for railway conveniences at a later date.

Mr. J. H. Smith: There is already a railway to serve that country.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: There is no railway that will serve it to the extent that dairying land requires to be served. Large areas of land are available close to existing railways, and these could be economically worked and used for dairying purposes if only they were thrown open for selection.

The Minister for Lands: This is not the right time in which to discuss that matter.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: No doubt it will be discussed when we reach the Lands Estimates. The time has come when Parliament should demand more information as to the possibility of utilising to a greater extent land already served by railways, in preference to going in for further settlement schemes. I have some knowledge of the State, and am satisfied that if we obtained a complete report on this matter we should be astonished to learn the large area of land that could be brought into use if a practical scheme for settlement could be evolved. Such a scheme must be evolved if we are to look for economic stability. We must make these lands available for people who can utilise them, and we must build up the railways that we have already constructed. The time has come for a review of railway freights generally. The Minister for Railways has already reduced the freight rates on wool. I wish he had done this earlier, because I have had my wool transported already. The man who was a little late this year will derive advantage from the reduction. The early bird on this occasion has failed to get the worm. Someone has to miss the opportunity. Those who transported their wool early in the season have had to pay the higher rates, but those who sheared later and marketed later will gain the advantage.

The Minister for Railways: What about applying for a rebate, though I do not think you would get it?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The railway authorities should keep closely in touch with all activities connected with the development of the State. They should also familiarise themselves with all marketing facilities. The railways should be well versed in regard to the paying capacity of different commodities. Freights are generally fixed upon that basis. The railways take into consideration the paying capacity of a commodity and fix the freight according to that basis. The time has arrived when all these commodities should be reviewed. I do not say the time is exactly opportune now because there is no stability in commodity value. This value is fluctuating to a great extent. It is mostly on the down grade, and I do not think it would be wise to attempt to carry out this idea at present. I believe, however, it will soon become necessary to go into the charges laid down in the freight book generally, and review the freight from the aspect of the capacity of the commodity to pay. In years gone by the Railway Department decided that wool was a highly remunerative commodity. It was, therefore, asked to pay a higher freight than other commodities, and was indeed charged the maximum freight. The department should rather review all the marketing charges than rush in and make a reduction only upon the freight on wool. I do not say they could dictate with respect to the other commodities. Just as the Railway Department have penalised wool in a comparative sense in the rates charged, so has everyone else imposed upon the value of wool. Shipping freights are relatively higher on wool than on other commodities, and commission charges are also higher. One is staggered to find the enormous amount that is charged against this commodity. Commissions are charged and have been charged for years, but why they are paid very few people can explain. Some persons who should never have any say in the matter are able to impose charges upon wool.

The CHAIRMAN: I would draw the hon. member's attention to the fact that we are discussing the Railway Estimates.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I am arguing that it is wrong for the Railway Department to rush in and reduce the freight on wool, without also taking some interest in all the other charges that are made upon it. We cannot say we will help the pastoralist by

carrying wool at a freight that is not remunerative, and suggest that he alone is carrying a burden out of all proportion to that which he is justified in carrying. It is quite right for the railways to review the freight rates on wool, but they should also review all the other impositions charged against it, and see whether someone else could not disgorge some of the profit that is altogether beyond the services that are rendered in securing that profit. It is relevant to the Railway Estimates to say we cannot go on using our railways for the purpose of reducing freights so that other people can maintain their high charges against all justification. The same thing may be said of wheat. The market for wheat either makes or breaks the railway revenue. The position of the railways depends upon the marketing of wheat. If we cannot market it, at any rate at the cost of production, during the period when we have a fair price offering on the world's markets, our Railway Estimates are not worth the paper they are written upon and the Budget figures cannot be accepted as sound. The railways depend upon the marketing of our wheat crop. It is true we are marketing our wool to-day, but prices are so low that it is questionable whether they will more than pay the interest that is due to the various financial institutions for money advanced to the pastoralist. The wool position is bad enough, as there is likely to be no surplus from wool sales, but the wheat position is decidedly worse. The whole thing is a question of price.

The CHAIRMAN: I must ask the hon. member to confine his remarks to the Railway Estimates.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I am endeavouring to do so.

The CHAIRMAN: I have not noticed it.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I am going to deal exhaustively with the position because the Commissioner of Railways has done so in his report. He proposes to do certain things with regard to wheat transport, a matter which so vitally affects the Railway Estimates. If wheat is not transported and it is not possible to market it, the Estimates are useless.

The Minister for Railways: You are building a new railway into unknown country. That is the connection with the subject matter of the debate.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I want to make it clear that unless it is possible to market our wheat, at all events at the cost of production, we cannot operate the railways under these Estimates. A complete review of the position will very soon be necessary. The Government must take a greater interest in marketing problems, not only as these affect wool and wheat, but other commodities. All kinds of goods are carried on the railways, though the volume is not as great as with wool and wheat, neither do they return the same revenue. The carriage of wheat is such a big factor in the stability of railway finance that the Government should actively review the marketing position, and ascertain whether it is possible to continue should the situation remain as it is. I think both the Commissioner and the Minister said something about the wheat firms and their consumptive capacity at the ports in comparison with the railway deliveries to the buyers. It is purely a question of marketing. At the commencement of the last harvest the market was buoyant. There was a general desire on the part of all who were interested to get the maximum quantity of wheat to the ports. It was not long, however, before the bottom fell out of the market and there was a general easing off in selling activities. It was impossible to maintain the same standard of railway deliveries with which the beginning of the season had started. This year things are likely to be different. I believe the market will open weak, and that only a comparatively small lot of wheat will then be transported by the railways. I also believe that the market will firm as time goes on, that increased shipping will take place, and that the market will have a greater consumptive capacity than it had earlier in the year or had later in last year. In other words it is likely that the position will be reversed from last year. The Commissioner of Railways says in his report that he will effect economies by the carriage of wheat at a uniform rate throughout the year. He can only do that if he goes into the question of shipping wheat. He can only carry wheat in proportion to the amount of overseas shipping available, for he cannot stack more than a given quantity of wheat at the ports. The quantity of wheat he will carry in a given period depends upon the number of ships in port ready to take it away, and the number of ships in port de-

pends upon the consumptive capacity of the various countries that import our wheat. Therefore the Railway Department cannot be operated on a rule of thumb method as proposed by the Commissioner. The whole thing depends upon marketing. Unless the wheat can be successfully marketed, the Commissioner cannot operate. The market will dictate the quantity of wheat to be carried. Australia has a certain period of the year for marketing its wheat. Similarly, other wheat producing countries have their marketing periods. Our period is from December to about September. We must market our wheat during those months. If we fail to do that, we come into competition with other countries marketing their product at the usual period. Argentine wheat and Australian wheat go on the market simultaneously, and our arrangements have to be such that we can deliver between December and September. Our railways must be organised so as to carry the maximum quantity of wheat at any given period, or else a reduced quantity, according to the shipping arrangements for oversea markets. The question of wheat marketing is of vital importance not only to our Railway Department, but also to the whole State. If the wheat is not sold, the entire Budget goes by the board. I am disappointed at the helplessness of those in authority on this all-important question. The Government should inquire into the position of marketing, and should try to make arrangements by which the marketing of our wheat will begin when the wheat is available, so that the railways can start carrying it when it is available. To-day we are actually receiving new season's wheat. It is being carted to the sidings to-day. Nobody knows what is going to happen to it. Apparently no one, apart from the producer, is much interested in the question.

The Minister for Lands: Will you tell us how the Government can help when the Wheat Pool and the Westralian Farmers cannot do it?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: They are marketing agents in a limited sense. The Government could make inquiries of banks, traders, and others interested in the stability of the State, as producers are doing to-day. I am disappointed that our railway authorities, who must realise what the wheat means to them from a revenue point of

view, are leaving to the producer the whole agitation for stabilisation of wheat prices. The Government themselves have not done anything in the matter. We have never heard a sound from the Government as to what might be done. The voice that is heard is entirely the voice of the producer. I claim that there should be conferences, not only of producers, but of the Commissioner of Railways and the Government with banks, traders, and all others interested. We should not simply wait for something to turn up as regards wheat marketing. The question will not be solved by waiting for something to turn up. But apparently no one outside the producer is interested in the matter.

The Minister for Lands: You will know all about that on Thursday next.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I know perfectly well that there are people who say that the present drift in the Railway Department can be met by wage reductions, retrenchment of officers, and dismissal of employees generally. But something bigger than that is required. Mere reductions will not solve the problem but will only aggravate it. The great trouble to-day is that of unemployment. The railway authorities know perfectly well that the State is suffering because the earning capacity of the public does not enable them to buy the commodities that are available. Increasing the number of unemployed will not improve the condition of the State generally. In my opinion the Minister for Railways was on the right track when he said that the position of the railways is not due to any incapacity to serve the State in carrying its products, but due to a competition to which the State cannot economically submit. I agree that something should be done besides attacking wages and salaries and retrenching employees. In the matter of retrenchment the practice of the Railway Department is totally out of step with the practice of the Education Department as outlined by the Minister here recently. The Railway Department are not practising the methods advocated by the Minister for Education. When that Minister spoke on the subject, he was conveying the Government policy to this Chamber. But, I repeat, that policy is not being practised in the Railway Department. I know it will be said that the

railways are under the control of the Commissioner, and that officers receiving less than £400 per annum are absolutely left in his hands to appoint and dismiss as he thinks best in the interests of the system. I know, however, that every public servant, even the Commissioner of Railways with special authority under a special Act, must of necessity respect Government policy. My experience whilst Minister was that the officers of the Public Service have a general regard for the policy of the Government, with a view to ensuring something like uniformity in the various departments, especially as regards treatment of the employees. According to the Minister for Education, the system operating in the Railway Department should be something totally different. I am informed that 37 men of 65 years and upwards have been retrenched. Nobody can complain about that. The 65-year limit is laid down as the retiring age. Therefore the Commissioner of Railways is well within his rights in recognising that general law and retiring those men. However, it is sad to learn that of the 37 only 11 are entitled to pensions. The State might many years ago have initiated a system of superannuation for public servants reaching the retiring age. Again, 16 lads who have just reached the age of 21 years have been retrenched because no openings are available for them. This is a distinctly depressing state of affairs, because these young men have devoted their years of training to the railway service. They are now retrenched although they began training on the clear understanding that positions would be available for them in the Railway Department. Today they are really too old to take up other callings, and Heaven knows what will become of them unless prosperity returns speedily and the Railway Department re-employ them. Then 29 other employees, 27 males and 2 females, have been retrenched, or have received notice. It is interesting to note the service of these employees in the Railway Department. Of the number, 25 are in the clerical branch and four are professional officers. Of the 25 in the clerical branch, one has had 34 years' service, one 26, one 19, three 18, one 17, two 16, three 9, four 7, and nine less than 5 years'. All of them have been trained in the Railway Department, and in practically

every case there was room for regression. The Minister for Education admits the justice of regression. He has pointed out here that the most efficient and most experienced officers should not be retrenched in the absence of special reasons. But we find the Railway Department picking out one here and another there, while there is plenty of scope for regression. No effort is made to regress officers; they are simply dismissed from the service. I do not wish to say that there has been victimisation; but still a certain opportunity for favouritism, for special consideration to special persons, does exist. It would not be so bad if the same method were practised right through the department. It is extraordinary to find, however, that in the Locomotive Branch the driver is regressed to fireman, the fireman is regressed to cleaner—

The Minister for Railways: That is under an arbitration award.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Surely the Minister will agree that that has been the established practice for many years. It is one to which the hon. gentleman himself has subscribed. He was Minister for Railways about 1921, when retrenchment was necessary; and at that time representations were made and he agreed to the policy of last on, first off. That has been the practice in the Traffic Branch as well as in the Locomotive Branch. It has worked well. I have heard no complaints about it. The Commissioner of Railways has been able to economise by working on those lines. In the case of railway officers, however, a totally different method has been adopted. In my opinion that method is decidedly wrong. It is not a fair thing. I enter my protest against the adoption of one method in one department and a totally different method in another department. If that kind of thing is permitted, there will be opportunity for those in authority to show special favouritism to some employees while penalising others. The Government should endeavour to ensure that the policy outlined here by the Minister for Education is adopted generally. Before sitting down I want also to commend the Minister for his explanation regarding the electricity supply throughout the metropolitan area. I agree with him that there is something radically wrong in the agreement entered into with the Perth City Council. It might have been right when it was negoti-



ated, but the time has arrived when the actual working of that agreement has demonstrated its unsoundness. It is quite wrong that one section of the metropolitan area should get special advantages to such an extent that it can make enormous profit, as stated by the Minister the other night. The City Council can get that profit only by penalising other sections in the metropolitan area. One set of ratepayers are disadvantaged under the agreement, which has not operated in the way originally expected by Parliament. Because it has operated to the advantage of one section, it has also proved to be a penalty on another section. The result is that whereas one section has to pay more than true value for electric current, another section gets it at below cost.

Mr. North: And this thing is becoming worse and worse.

Mr. H. W. Mann: The agreement was quite sound when it was made.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I am in accord with that.

Mr. H. W. Mann: And it might well have gone the other way.

The Minister for Railways: No, it could not have gone the other way, because we could not charge more than cost, whatever that might be.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Suppose Parliament makes an agreement, and one of the parties to that agreement suffers a disadvantage.

Mr. H. W. Mann: The City Council gave away a concession, you know.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I am not going to argue that to-night. Probably there will be a time and place in which to argue it later, because I hope the Minister will do something to get the opinion of Parliament regarding this agreement. Suppose the agreement after it was made had proved to be a disadvantage to the City Council. I would have said, and I believe Parliament would have been sympathetic and said, that since the agreement had not operated as expected, but had imposed a penalty on one section of the ratepayers, those whom it had been desired to assist, that agreement should be reviewed. But neither Parliament nor anybody associated with the agreement ever thought it would operate as it has done. No one ever suspected the City Council was going to make an enormous profit while other ratepayers adjacent to the city

would be penalised for the benefit of the city ratepayer.

Mr. H. W. Mann: The city ratepayer is paying high rates.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I am talking, not of the city rates, but of the electric supply agreement, a definite agreement between the Minister and the City Council. Parliament made that agreement in the terms of the Bill that was then introduced, because of certain information that was supplied and because of certain anticipations. They were carefully scrutinised. They were subject to expert advice and expert investigation, and Parliament at the time thought the information supplied justified the passing of the Bill and the granting of this special consideration to the City Council. But actually the operation of the agreement has proved that that was wrong, that expectations have not been realised, and that the agreement was based on wrong premises. It is clear that Parliament was—not wilfully, but unwittingly—misled by the anticipated results of the agreement. Parliament, I think, is now convinced that a wrong was done from the point of view of the ratepayers adjacent to the city. Surely, then, it is reasonable to say the agreement should be reviewed. I do not mean that we should go to the extent of passing a Bill to repeal the agreement, but I do say the Minister's figures, plus the experience of those of us in the outer districts of the metropolitan area, justify its review. In my electorate the local authorities are groaning under the burden they are carrying, as against the price charged to the City Council. The Minister has to penalise those outer local authorities in order to meet the special circumstances of an agreement with the City Council which has acted in an unexpected way. Therefore my constituents have called upon me to see if something cannot be done to relieve them of this unfair impost. I venture the opinion that, generally, this is the view of the local authorities just outside the city. So I am glad the Minister has raised this matter and given it some prominence in his speech. I will support him in having the matter reviewed by some tribunal for the purpose of seeing whether a more equitable arrangement could not be arrived at. Before I sit down, let me say it is popular to-day generally to attack the railway system. Many people are out to convey that the railway

system has been unduly hampered by privileges extended to members of Parliament and others. It is a pity that absolute accuracy cannot be maintained regarding privileges extended to members. Publicity is all right, provided it is founded on actual fact. When one writes special articles drawing public attention to given matters, he should see that every detail of his writings is correct. To my knowledge as a member, publicity has been given to certain alleged privileges which I have never enjoyed, and which no other member has enjoyed. Again, while it is all right to review actual privileges, it requires to be understood that those privileges are not generally used by members. The privileges may be there, but some of them were not accurately described in the newspaper article I have in mind; and even those that were accurately described are not generally used by members. They are used in moderation, perhaps. But, judging by the criticism we have read and heard, one would think that all members habitually took advantage of their railway privileges; that at regular periods they took their families all around the State. I do not know any members who indulge in such a practice.

The Minister for Railways: They could not do it, for they have no such privilege.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The general opinion outside is that members have that privilege and have abused it. But our privileges are very limited, and even those limited privileges are not being used by members to the extent indicated. I venture to assert that many of the privileges available to members have never been used by members. Those privileges are there, because in special circumstances on special occasions it is only right that members should be entitled to them. I am not objecting to a review of our privileges, but I do want accuracy to be observed in any such review, and I do not want members of Parliament to be misrepresented by those who get a certain enjoyment out of trying to discredit members of Parliament so that their own faults and shortcomings may not be noticed by the general public.

Mr. Corboy: But is it not sour grapes? Most of such criticism comes from disgruntled would-be members.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Periodically there seems to be a popular wave of criticism aimed at members. Invariably it is

favoured by newspapers, for special reasons no doubt; and, like the snowball, such a movement gathers weight as it goes and its initial inaccuracies multiply until, like our main road construction and developmental railway construction, it gets out of hand. And there is also a growing desire to cast reflections upon the work of the railway employees. I resent this. I have travelled a great deal on our railways, and I say the railway employee is most attentive in his desire to assist passengers and to maintain the standard of railway travelling and railway earnings. The public should realise that a railway job is not an attractive one. People go on to the platform at the Perth railway station and see a number of officers there. They are all necessary for the public welfare. But people will view all railway employees from the Perth platform. They forget the disabilities of others working on the railways. For instance, do the public ever think of what the loco. drivers and firemen, and even the cleaners, have to go through? They are subject to be called out at any hour of the night. It is no regular shift they keep. There is the call book, and a man cannot go to bed and say he will not be wanted until a given time; he is likely to be called out at any time, and he has to respond. I admit a general effort is made to allow as much time off as possible. But the fact remains that the regularity of starting is determined by the traffic offering. Just as our railways operate in relation to shipping and marketing, so our railway employees work in relation to the traffic required. Again, take the railway employees travelling on mixed trains throughout the winter months, travelling more or less under discomfort owing to the cold in the railway carriages with the wind blowing and the rain falling. When the train pulls up at a siding the unfortunate guard has to go out and paddle around the railway yard, connecting or disconnecting trucks.

Mr. Patrick: Has he not a stove in his van?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: A stove is of no value to a man who has to go out into the weather, stumbling through pools of water. When he comes back to his van he has no chance of changing his clothes, but has to suffer discomfort until the end of his journey. It is all very well to cast reflections on the railway employee and speak of his

cushy job, but I should like to see some of his critics going through what the guard has to go through on goods trains and mixed trains. Then I should like them to go through what the families of the locomotive drivers have to go through in the upsetting of home life, the being called out at all hours, and the getting home again at all hours. It is all very fine for critics to consider the railway employee from a superficial point of view. The Arbitration Court in granting working conditions to the railway employees views the whole of his disabilities; and it is only reasonable that the public should take the same comprehensive view, rather than lean to the superficial view periodically dished up by interested newspapers desiring to cover up their own faults and their own profiteering by publishing articles that are misleading to the public. I do not wish to say more than that I believe the wages and salaries of railway servants should not be based upon the earning capacity of the railways. If we are to so base them, we shall have to go into the question whether we can carry certain commodities at a loss, whether we can maintain the railways in the numbers that we are building to-day. Despite the questions that have to be investigated, if we have to say that the conditions of employment in the railway service shall be based on the earning capacity of the railways—

The Minister for Railways: You cannot say that; you would not reach finality.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: No, but it is said that because the railways are losing and that their earnings are not up to the previous standard, the matter can be put right by reducing wages and salaries. You cannot do anything of the kind, and it is unfair to approach the question from that point of view. I believe that reform is necessary: I like reform and review; I believe the present depression will do a certain amount of good in the way of bringing about reconstruction on a sounder basis, but at the same time I want the investigation to be on a more comprehensive basis than the constantly referring to the need for reduction in wages and salaries. The whole question of railway economy must be based on a more general investigation, and I believe that Parliament will generally assist the Minister in his efforts to bring about the reconstruction to

the end of securing a better financial development than would be the position if we limited the matter to the question of wages and general working conditions.

**MR. WILLCOCK** (Geraldton) [5.49]: Before the vote is put, does the Minister intend to give us any information with regard to the matter discussed on Thursday night last? We should like to know the reason why the Government instructed the Commissioner to continue using certain coal against his expressed wish, a wish referred to not only in his report to the Minister but in the report which came before Parliament. I think the House is entitled to an explanation.

**THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS** (Hon. J. Scaddan—Maylands—in reply)

[5.50]: There is not much to say on the subject referred to by the hon. member. I am anxious not to hastily deal with the question, and possibly do an injustice to people who have found the capital to develop one of the coal mines at Collie. The hon. member knows that for a long period we were obtaining coal from practically one set of mines controlled by the Amalgamated Collieries, and that strenuous efforts were made to obtain a free market for coal for railway purposes. Those efforts were doomed to failure. Tenders were invited, but none was received. The hon. member knows that it was not on account of a lack of desire on the part of the companies to tender, and the Griffin Company made reference to the fact that, if they attempted to tender, it would lead to serious industrial trouble. The hon. member also knows quite well that the position with regard to the price is fixed by the agreement for taking such coal; the miners' wages are fixed on the basis of the calorific value of the coal they mine at each of the mines. This had the effect of making Griffin coal uneconomic from the point of view of railway consumption. If we obtained Griffin coal at its economic value as arrived at by firebox test, we would not have paid 19s. per ton, but much less. There was no possibility of our doing that, for the reason that the miners would not agree to hewing coal unless it was paid for on its calorific value. Irrespective of how we might feel about the matter we are under existing conditions bound to take coal and to pay for it on its calorific value.

The Griffin mine is new, comparatively speaking, and up to just prior to the general elections, it had not supplied any great quantity of coal; it had not become one of the producing mines. The Commissioner of Railways refused to enter into an agreement with that company on the same basis as the agreement with the Amalgamated Collieries unless he had a summer firebox test. The Government at the time instructed him to proceed as quickly as possible to make that test. The test was made and, briefly, I wish to say that I am astonished that some people—who are looked upon as a class that would not suspect dishonesty in others, because others would not be entitled to assume that they were dishonest—rather took up the attitude that in the firebox tests made by the Commissioner there were some little happenings that were not quite free and altogether above board, that there was some collusion in the interests of the Amalgamated Collieries. All that had the effect of creating an unfortunate position in respect of the coal that was being obtained from Collie. The present Government had to face the fact when they assumed office that a mine had been opened up with Government assistance, in the belief that the coal was satisfactory, that it was a hard coal, and that its use would provide a supply independent of that of the Amalgamated Collieries. Firebox tests were made during the summer months, but it was found that the coal from that mine, although it had a high calorific value, it did not have the same economic value as the other coals. The Commissioner stated definitely that, in those circumstances, he was not prepared to take coal from any mine unless it could produce a coal that could be used economically. By virtue of that fact the then Minister said that he would only be a party to opening up new mines that could produce a coal that was hard and that could stand a firebox test. I wish to be careful because I have no desire to do anyone an injury. The test proved that, while the coal was hard, it could not be used economically, and the Commissioner declared that he did not intend to take a further supply. The member for Geraldton (Mr. Willcock) told the House that the then Government supported the attitude of the Commissioner, and decided that no coal should be taken from the

Griffin mine. I can find no evidence of that.

Hon. P. Collier: The member for Geraldton said he did not disagree with the Commissioner.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is true. The whole matter was allowed to drop for a period. When we assumed office we had to face the position that a number of men had invested a certain amount of capital in this particular mine in the belief that the coal would be satisfactory, and that those men suddenly found themselves cut off. The question arose whether it was desirable, in view of the statements made and the accusations that were flung around, that we should take up the attitude that we would not inquire further into the matter and allow the mine to be closed down. Instead of doing that, we asked the Commissioner whether there was any serious objection to using Griffin coal during the winter months. The Commissioner said definitely "No," and that there was very little difference between the Griffin coal and coal from the other mines during the winter months. He added that he would not be a party to using Griffin coal during the summer months.

Mr. Willcock: There is nothing like that in the report.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No, he said nothing like that in the report because he only dealt with it in the way all coal is dealt with, namely, by way of a test. The Government having about £21,000 invested in this mine—

Hon. P. Collier: It is well secured.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Secured by the funds of private individuals.

Hon. P. Collier: A joint and several guarantee.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is true, but the money would have to be found by the people who had already put large sums into the development of the mine in the honest belief that they were going to benefit the State in the process. It would have been simple to say—"It is not our troubles; the Commissioner has declared that he will not take any of it, and therefore we will not worry any more about it." In view of the accusations that have been made, I suggest that we should have the person named in the agree-

ment appointed as arbitrator. and submit the facts to him, and request him to gather evidence from any source he likes, so as to decide whether the test made was in accordance with recognised practice, to determine whether everything done was fair and above board, and whether the Commissioner was justified in arriving at the conclusion he came to arising out of the test. Mr. Howe, the State Mining Engineer, who has no interest at all in the matter, has said that the tests were conducted in accordance with recognised practice, that they were fair and above board and that there was no evidence of collusion. It was not a matter of the Government merely approving of the coal and getting a product that enabled the drivers to use it; it had to be proved to the satisfaction of an independent person, one having a knowledge of the industry, and we satisfied ourselves regarding the coal. Then we arrived at the present position. Complaints were voiced in the Legislative Council. One hon. member there moved for the appointment of a Royal Commission. He went so far as to suggest the basis on which the inquiry should be held. Under normal conditions, the Government might have agreed to the appointment of a Royal Commission of inquiry into the various phases that have been dealt with. On the other hand, unless some sound reasons are advanced for the appointment of a Royal Commission, which would involve the community in heavy expense, the Government have no right to give way in the face of the clamour that has been raised in that direction. I say definitely that, in my opinion, no one concerned with this whole question has done anything, nor is likely to do anything, that it would be necessary to hide. I do not believe anything has been done that has not been carried out in the full light of publicity. It would not be possible—I say it advisedly in view of the criticism that has been levelled at me, among others—for anyone concerned in the production of coal that is for use as the fuel supply for a railway system such as our own, to do anything of any magnitude, and continue to do it, without someone making the position known. For my part, I do not think there is any need for an inquiry into the position regarding Collie coal, unless it be on the one point as to whether we are getting, under the existing arrangements, the best economic results, from the standpoint of the railways, out of our native coal. There may be some argument on that point.

In those circumstances, I have suggested, and Cabinet has agreed to adopt my proposal, that the Government should obtain the services of some outside and quite independent person to give us advice, as soon as possible, as to whether we are getting the best economic value from the native coal we are using. That will apply to all the Collie coal we are using to-day, and not that from the Griffin mine alone. To me the Griffin mine is merely a circumstance involved in the whole question. The point is, are we getting the best value from the native coal that is possible in the interests of the community, who have to use the fuel and have to pay for it?

Mr. Wilson: I should say, yes.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I did not think the hon. member would say, no. Let me tell the member for Collie (Mr. Wilson) that I believe there is a lot of misunderstanding regarding the use of Collie coal. For a number of years there were serious complaints about the coal and the ex-Minister for Railways, as an old loco. driver, will know that the complaints against Collie coal were that it was a bad steaming coal, that it imposed a lot of additional work upon the men on the footplates, and that, in addition, it was difficult to get up a sufficient pressure of steam to enable the trains to pull their loads on heavy grades.

Mr. Willcock: There was a lot of trouble.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is true that an attempt was made to secure an arrangement to govern the supply of coal from Collie.

Mr. Willcock: Yes, good coal.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: At that time there were a number of small mines all over the place. Some of them were so small that I think their names are almost forgotten now. There was the Wallsend mine, the Collie Burn mine and goodness knows how many more. Some of those small mines had only been started for a comparatively little while, and they were turning out what they called coal, but it was not what was wanted.

Mr. Wansbrough: Some of it was like stone in those days.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: It was stone.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes. At that time we considered it necessary to secure a better basis on which coal would be delivered for use on the railways. To that end we got the men who were responsible for hewing the coal and who were interested

in securing an increased output to give consideration to the matter. We secured the co-operation of the Labour organisations representing both the coal miners and the loco. drivers.

Hon. P. Collier: That is how they came into it.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is so. I was responsible for bringing them into the matter.

Mr. Panton: You were chairman at the conference.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I had a definite object in view, and it was to keep the money, which we were sending to Newcastle for coal supplies, in our own State for circulation here.

Hon. P. Collier: That is what is described as a "scandal" now.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes.

Hon. P. Collier: That is what is now described as "Trades Hall domination."

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I can assure hon. members that anyone who touches coal is subject to what is called spontaneous combustion. All sorts of things have been said about various people. I am afraid some of it has had a political tinge, but that does not matter. At that time, we secured the interest of the Australian Labour Party in the question for the purpose of having that body to stand between the two other Labour organisations who were preventing the greater use of our native coal. As a result, we obtained an agreement, which has been effective, and up to this point has been of benefit to the State, to the loco. drivers and to the miners. The loco. drivers agreed to use Collie coal subject to the miners agreeing not to be parties to supplying coal not over a certain definite value. On the other hand, the Government, with the assistance of the loco. drivers and the miners as well, were able to cut out the mines that were supplying what was known as soft coal and were making it so difficult for the railways. We got rid of those mines and made the position generally infinitely better. Side by side with the undertaking given by the loco. drivers, the Collie miners gave the Government another important undertaking. They said, "We don't want you to be fearful in the event of the Government ceasing to import Newcastle coal and using 100 per cent. Collie coal on the railways, that we

will hold you up. We will give you an agreement that there shall be no hold-up of production."

Mr. Wilson: And there has been none.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is the point. There has been no hold-up. I do not see that there can be any objection to the adoption of such a course. As a result of the arrangement, it has been mutually satisfactory to Collie, to the railways and to the State generally. The money that would have gone to New South Wales for the purchase of Newcastle coal has remained in circulation in our own State. The only point that can arise is in the event of the opening up of a new mine. Personally I have no objection to that. If the opening up of a new field assures the public of continuity of supplies and gives them a better deal, what objection can be raised? On the other hand, I cannot see any advantage to be derived from opening up a new field near Collie, cutting that township in half and necessitating the spending of large sums of Government funds in providing utilities necessary for a new area. On the other hand, if a new field were to be opened up near Perth or east of the ranges, I cannot see any objection to be raised to the project.

Mr. Wilson: There is provision for that in the agreement.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is so. The member for Collie knows, however, that while such provision exists in the agreement, it applies for three years only. In those circumstances, it has little effect. If a new field were opened up to-morrow, I doubt if it could be developed to the productive stage within a period of three years, so that although provision may be made in the agreement, it really does not afford any protection from the point of view I have indicated. That, however, is not the point. What are we to do regarding a mine that we have, at any rate, gone some way in encouraging? Are we to ask the people concerned in that undertaking to throw £70,000 in the air, without having any proper investigation? Are we to throw men who left their employment on other fields and sacrificed their priority of employment, to which the member for Guildford-Midland (Hon. W. D. Johnson) has made reference, on to the scrap heap and leave them stranded? Under conditions existing to-day, such men would not be able to find employment in Collie. I do not think they could be taken on at any of the

mines operating there at the present time. All I am concerned about in dealing with this question is to do justice to everyone concerned. I think the whole position can be cleaned up without involving the State in much expense. In my opinion, we have passed the stage at which any further inquiry is necessary and I hope to be in a position before the end of the session to inform hon. members what we propose to do regarding the Griffin mine. In the meantime, we must see to it that fair and adequate protection is given to all concerned.

Vote put and passed.

*Votes—State Batteries, £28,197; Cave House (including caves of the South-West, etc.), £13,000—agreed to.*

*Vote—Sale of Government Property Trust Account, £126,979:*

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS** (Hon. J. Lindsay—Mt. Marshall) [6.9]: It is necessary to explain one or two matters relating to the Vote. The Sale of Government Property Trust Fund is in a different position this year from what it has been in years gone by. The Sale of Government Property Trust Act of 1907 provided that when plant or property was purchased or built from funds voted by Parliament and sold in a subsequent year, the proceeds were to be paid into a special account; and advances made in one year, and recovered in subsequent years, were to be dealt with in a similar manner. That applies, for instance, to the financing of ratepayers for sewerage connections. We have spent a considerable sum of money under that heading, as hon. members are aware. The Act was revoked by the Financial Agreement Act, which came into operation on the 1st July, 1927. Because of that fact, the Estimates now before hon. members are different from what was the position in the past. I will explain why that is so. It was decided at conferences of Premiers held at Canberra and elsewhere, that in future all money received in the Property Trust Account should be utilised as loan funds. As from July, 1927, in consequence of the passing of the Financial Agreement Act, amounts that would previously have been paid to the special trust account have been credited either to Consolidated Revenue, if revenue money was concerned, or into loan repayments account.

The requirements in regard to the latter are that the amounts so received shall be available for reappropriation for loan work. In other words, in all probability this is the last occasion on which the Sale of Government Property Trust Account will appear on the Estimates, and the money at present available can be used to finance certain undertakings. The position of the old fund on the 30th June, 1930, was as follows:—

|  | £               |
|--|-----------------|
| Balance on 30th June, 1929 ..                                | 526,579         |
| Net receipts for 1929-30 ..                                  | 17,389          |
| <b>Total .. ..</b>   | <b>£543,950</b> |
| Expenditure against appropriations voted by Parliament .. .. | 221,579         |
| <b>Leaving unexpended on 30th June, 1930 .. ..</b>           | <b>£322,371</b> |

Of this amount, provision is made on this year's Sale of Government Property Trust Estimates representing £126,979. If all of this is expended, the balance on the 30th June next will be £195,392. That is the position generally regarding the Sale of Government Property Trust Fund, and if hon. members require information regarding any of the items, I shall be able to supply it.

**MR. MCCALLUM** (South Fremantle) [6.13]: As the Minister for Works has indicated, the money included in the Vote has been used largely in the past to maintain works that have been undertaken out of loan funds. The Estimates show the desperate position the Government are in, or rather the desperate policy they are adopting in the provision for expenditure of this money during the year. I would instance the position regarding the renovation and upkeep of public buildings throughout the State, such as hospitals, schools, police quarters, school teachers' quarters, throughout the State. I refer to those on which loan money has been spent for renovations and upkeep. In that respect, the Vote this year has been reduced by £31,000. That appeals to me as a policy of absolute despair. Public buildings and works of all descriptions are to be neglected and are not to be maintained. It will cost a lot more money to put those works in condition later on. During the last 12 months or more there has been a consistent agitation on the part of school teachers for improved quarters, particularly in the country districts. For many

years those quarters were neglected, particularly during war time. An effort was made to catch up arrears of work in that respect and to provide something like decent quarters for the teachers. This year that vote is to be reduced by £16,400 as against what was available last year.

The Minister for Works: That is right. No money is available.

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

Mr. McCALLUM: For years the school teachers have been pressing for improvements to quarters in country districts, and we tried to meet them, but the Vote shows that less than half the amount previously provided will be spent this year. The school teachers were very dissatisfied with the progress previously made. If they were dissatisfied with a Vote of £30,000, I do not know how they will view a Vote of £10,000. No doubt the complaint of the school teachers is justified. Improvements have been made bit by bit, but the type of cottage provided is very poor. The whole of the public buildings are to suffer. Not a coat of paint or a bit of kalsomine is to be given to any building. School teachers' quarters, police quarters, and hospitals will suffer, because no money will be available for them. Whereas £10,000 was provided for roads, bridges and drainage in the group areas last year, a sum of only £1,000 will be provided this year. Thus there has been slaughter all round, and when the time comes to meet the situation, the expense will be greater than if a little money had been provided each year. For some years the State has subsidised the purchase of stud stock, and whereas £1,260 was spent last year, nothing is provided for this year. This will mean a great set-back to our stock-raising industry.

The Minister for Works: Less money is available this year.

Mr. McCALLUM: The Estimates show a decrease of £94,601, but items have been reduced to the extent of £162,253. Thus money is being spent in other directions, instead of being made available for the items I have enumerated. Last year £96,000 was made available from this Vote, apart from loan money, for improvements to Victoria Quay, Fremantle, but this year no money is provided. Is it to be taken that the work on the berth now undergoing reconstruction will be stopped?

The Minister for Works: No money is available.

Mr. McCALLUM: That is a serious matter, because both Victoria Quay and North Wharf need attention.

The Minister for Works: North Wharf is a different matter.

Mr. McCALLUM: It is doubtful whether North Wharf will carry the wheat traffic this year.

The Minister for Works: I know the position there is serious.

Mr. McCALLUM: During the last six years we have spent about £100,000 a year on reconstruction work, but the indication is that all that work is to be stopped. North Wharf is in a very bad condition; piles have been badly eaten, and it has been necessary to prop up the wharf with additional piles. If the wharf gave way, there would be serious interference with the shipment of wheat and wool, and it is doubtful whether the harbour would be able to cope with the business. This Vote indicates a policy of despair.

The Minister for Lands: It is not a question of despair; we cannot get the money.

Mr. McCALLUM: What I complain about is the transfer of money to other classes of work. The money for blood stock should not be withdrawn. If our wheat and wool are to be marketed, the wharves at the chief seaport must be kept in good order.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS** (Hon. J. Lindsay—Mt. Marshall—in reply) [7.40]: I am not sure that to deal with the Vote as the Government have done is a policy of despair. It is a question of using the money available to us. It is all very well for the member for South Fremantle to say that school teachers have been agitating for better quarters for years past. We cannot be held responsible for what was done during those years. We shall have considerably less money to spend than had the previous Government. The estimate under this Vote is £126,979, a reduction of £94,601 on last year's expenditure. If members analyse the expenditure, they will find that the reduction is no greater than that on ordinary loan account. Loan funds available this year will be much less than the amounts spent in years gone by. North Wharf does not come under this account. We have spent certain money on reconstruction work at Victoria Quay. Until money becomes more plentiful, it is not intended to proceed with further



reconstruction after the work now in hand is completed. The position at North Wharf is rather serious, but the money for reconditioning that wharf does not come out of this Vote. The £20,000 comes out of revenue.

Mr. Sleeman: Will you transfer the workers from Victoria Quay to North Wharf?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am talking about the wharf, not the workers. We shall endeavour to find money to make some of the reconditioning work permanent. The member for South Fremantle spoke of an item for police stations and quarters, £2,000, last year, and nothing this year. A good deal of the expenditure last year was incurred in providing fly-proof doors, etc., which was necessary under an Arbitration Court award. This year I do not expect to purchase any new furniture. In furtherance of economy measures, we have an officer visiting the various Government departments to take over surplus furniture, and at the Public Works Department we have several rooms filled with furniture. Many offices were overstocked, so that instead of buying new furniture this year, it will be possible to meet requirements out of the store. The hon. member spoke about repairs to public buildings. The provision for additional repairs this year is £8,000. The money for this work previously came out of revenue Estimates, whereas this year it has been included in this account.

Mr. McCallum: Provision for additions and renovations to buildings not otherwise provided for is to drop from £10,495 to £2,500.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes; the Government have been compelled to exercise economy. Unless we have the money we cannot spend it. Some of the items have been increased, but taken on the whole there is a reduction of £94,601. One item that I assume will be dealt with by the Minister for Mines is the recoup on water charges for mining, £45,000.

Vote put and passed.

Department of Minister for Lands and Immigration (Hon. C. G. Latham, Minister).

*Vote—Lands and Surveys, £66,509:*

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS** (Hon. C. G. Latham—York) [7.44]: I suppose it is to the Lands Department that members will look to find some permanent solu-

tion for the unemployed trouble prevailing in the State. They have a perfect right to do that. Actually the settlement of our lands is the only permanent way in which we can avoid unemployment. I regret there are two things that we find ourselves up against. One of these is the amount of land that is available to throw open. I refer to first-class land, such as must be available for the people who have no means of their own. It is only this type of land that will give such people an opportunity to make a success of their ventures. The second is want of money for the construction of railways. I propose first of all to deal with our agricultural areas. Some time ago an arrangement was entered into with the Development and Migration Commission for the settlement of 3,500 farms. Everything was going along well until one of the experts of the Agricultural Department reported there was alkali in the soil in certain parts of the State. This seemed to give the commission an opportunity to hang up all negotiations that were then going on. To-day before anything further can be done we must have a soil analysis, survey and inspection made. The work is now being done by the field staff. It cannot be done quickly because we have only one expert available. Until the survey has been completed it will be impossible to proceed further with the scheme, concerning which an agreement was entered into.

Hon. P. Collier: Is this still being carried on?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The survey is still being made.

Mr. H. W. Mann: By the officer who condemned the land?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: By the only available professional officer possessing the requisite knowledge for that class of work. He has been ably assisted by Dr. Simpson, who is doing the laboratory work in connection with the analysis of the soil.

Mr. W. H. Mann: Did you not bring an expert from the Eastern States?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Professor Prescott was here. Unfortunately he broadly endorsed the view expressed by Dr. Teakle. I am hopeful that so limited an area of soil will be found to be affected that we shall be able to go on with the scheme. Several people have gone out 70 miles from a railway. The idea was to link

up the whole area with railway services, and give the settlers the same opportunity to make a success of wheat farming as others have had elsewhere. Unfortunately, we have to complete the investigation before the commission will give any consideration in respect to further money for railway purposes.

Mr. Angelo: Will you not have to raise the price of wheat?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I will not pretend that the Government have power to do that. The position is a very desperate one for those on the edge of settlement so far from a railway. As members know, one railway is being built from Lake Grace to Karlgarin, according to the authorisation which was passed. It was hoped to have the investigation far enough advanced to link up with other systems the railways which would have gone into this particular part of the State, the survey of which is now going on.

Hon. P. Collier: So far as we know, less than half of the area involved is affected.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, so far as we know. It is the policy of the Government not to make any more land available there, for two reasons. The first is that the distance from a railway is too great. Secondly, if any reallocation has to be made, we must have some spare land in the district so that we can rearrange the holdings on a better basis. It would be unwise to take the settlers off their blocks unless we had an opportunity somewhere else in the same locality of reinstating them, because they would have more interest in and knowledge of the district than they would have in any other part of the State. With that in mind there is only one other place we could turn our attention to, namely, the North. I had an opportunity recently of visiting the Balla-Dartmoor country. My predecessor had a fair amount of land surveyed there. From what I know and from what our expert officers say, I should imagine the soil is all right, but I am rather pessimistic about the rainfall. We are carrying on the scheme put up by the ex-Minister for Lands (the member for Mount Magnet), and are having 100 acres tested before we make any of the land available. This is a wise policy because it is a new class of country for wheat production. I admit that

the type of land I saw growing wonderful crops was not the type of country I expected would be used for wheat growing.

Mr. H. W. Mann: What is the timber on it?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It seems to be mostly myal, mulga, and needlewood. There is also a fairly big sprinkling of pine. There are none of the timbers upon it that we are used to in the agricultural areas. It is a matter we should thoroughly investigate before placing people on the land outside the No. 3 rabbit-proof fence. East of Pithara, some 20 or 30 miles from a railway, we have land resumed from pastoral leases. This we have thrown open in fairly large areas for wheat growing and sheep raising. Whilst the Agricultural Bank trustees are at present unable to render financial assistance to the settlers, we are making it a condition that each one shall have at least £500 to enable him to determine whether he can make a success of that land or not. There is such a tremendous clamour for land, particularly on the part of people without capital, that we have to be very careful before we make any of it available in any of these districts either for wheat growing or sheep raising. One great advantage about this part of the State is that an abundance of water can be obtained from shallow sinking. We have also had to turn our attention to the South-West. The very best investment for a man on the land is to be found there. Although we know that the group settlements have cost a lot of money, we must all admit that a substantial benefit has accrued to the State by reason of that scheme. We have given a value to our lands in the South-West. I am convinced we have shown the old settlers what can be done. We have already drawn out of that country a considerable amount of wealth. What is more important still is that we are able to keep within the State large sums which have annually gone to other parts of Australia for the importation of produce we can now grow in abundance ourselves. I am now going to take the Committee into my confidence in regard to all the settlement that has occurred. Some members have raised a protest concerning the activities of the Government. We are investigating as closely as possible every land settlement scheme. A little while ago the people of Albany approached the Pre-

mier to have a large area of land there thrown open. I went down to investigate the proposition and took with me the expert advisers, a representative of the Agricultural Bank, and a representative of my department. A considerable amount of Crown land is available there. There is, however, a risk about that type of country. It will make good pasture land but will require a lot of capital to bring it into production. To test out the land we are having made available 25 farms, for which we hope to secure 25 good men. We intend to give them bank assistance, and if they make a success we shall feel justified in extending the settlement.

Mr. Wansbrough: Is that in the Kalgan district?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Kalgan and King River Districts.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: How far is it from the town?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is from 15 to 23 miles to the outside block. There are several roads, and road construction there is a simple matter. The butter factory at Albany has not been working full time because dairying has not reached the stage when it is possible for it to do so. The butter factory has been put under new management, and is being brought up to date. We ought to give these people some help if possible. I hope when the 25 areas are ready—20 of them are ready now—we shall be able to pick the right class of man who will make a success of dairying upon them. The policy of the Government in the South-West is dairying. That is our main object. We are not going to debar men from growing apples or potatoes on suitable country, but our main policy is dairying, and we are going to stick to that rigidly. Any sidelines will be given consideration and encouragement, but these will not be our primary object in land settlement. I now propose to deal with that portion of the State about which there have been many unfavourable comments, namely, Nornalup. With my officers I investigated the territory we are now settling. It is on the west side of the Frankland River. I guarantee there is no better looking country in the State. We have had the Agricultural Bank officers and those of the Lands Department over it, and we have had both a land and a timber classification of the entire area. I want to contradict the statement that we are destroying

£5,000,000 worth of timber. Nothing of the kind is being done; we are not overriding the powers of the Conservator.

Mr. Sleeman: Have you any official estimate?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have all I require, but probably not sufficient to suit some members. I am going to give members the fullest information so that they can hear what is being done. No one will suggest that Mr. Kessell is not a capable man and is not conservative in the job he holds. The complaint is that Mr. Kessell gets more consideration than does the Lands Department.

The Minister for Railways: He deserves it more.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He has been made thoroughly acquainted with all we have done in the territory, and has helped us. In the land that is being used we are not destroying any marketable timber. A certain amount of karri and tingle is growing there. The karri is overgrown and over-matured, and is therefore not good for milling. It is also pithy and hollow. The tingle has never been a satisfactory timber for marketing. Not much investigation has been made concerning it, but it is a type of timber that is difficult to work for furniture making. Along the Frankland River on the east side, and along the Deep River on the west side, we are reserving the timbers that are suitable for marketing purposes. On the north side where the jarrah is growing we propose to have nothing to do with the land. I would remind members that a railway is built to Nornalup. To-day it is not earning axle grease. We have no right to have a railway there unless we put it to some use. We contend that we are putting it to some use. I pointed out previously that the Government's idea was to use the Crown lands in the vicinity of the railway for the purpose of providing revenue. I wish to contradict the statement of the member for Guildford-Midland (Hon. W. D. Johnson) that 12 or 14 or 20 miles—I am not sure of the mileage mentioned by the hon. member—is too far to cart cream to a factory. Although the railway is in this district and the train runs twice a week, yet the whole of the cream produced there is carted to Denmark. Evidently it is more profitable to take the cream by road than to take it by rail. The Government hope, however, to alter that

position. The distance carted is 33 or 34 miles. Now, the people engaged in the industry should be the best judges of the matter.

Mr. McCallum: It may be a matter of necessity with them.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is not a matter of necessity, as there are two trains per week. The whole of the land has been classified as to soil every two chains. That was done by the previous Government. There is plenty of running water, and thus the district possesses all essentials for dairying. The shortest distance to a railway line is eight miles, and the longest 20 miles.

Mr. McCallum: How is the river to be crossed?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: By the bridge.

Mr. McCallum: Is the bridge reliable?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Very reliable. When I was down there, an inspection was made and no rot whatever was found in the woodwork. During most parts of the year the river could be crossed by an ordinary crossing if the banks were cut down a little. That would be so at all times of the year except the depth of winter. The river is an easy obstacle to overcome. The amount of criticism levelled at the scheme by people who know nothing about it has caused considerable unrest among the officials. In order that this should not be a land settlement scheme wholly by the Lands Department, the Government have called the Agricultural Bank into consultation. As a result the trustees of that institution have agreed to find the necessary money for the settlers. The Lands Department are not making the advances for clearing; those advances are being made by the Agricultural Bank. In the early stages of the scheme the Government found it necessary to send certain men to the district to do preliminary work. They were under Mr. Rogers, a Main Roads Board official who came over to the Lands Department to take charge of the preliminary work, such as erection of sheds and camps, and repairs to certain roads, more particularly the road from Walpole Inlet to the main connecting road on the west side of the river. During the first week or two 12 inches of rain fell, and a fair amount of money was wasted in endeavours to repair the road. However, as soon as we found that we were unable to do what was wanted, we resorted to water transport, and this is being used at the pre-

sent time. We get a launch at the river and run round to Walpole Inlet in a very short time, and there we deliver what is required. This is done without the cost of road repairs. The road itself is just a track cut through the bush, following the low, swampy country and therefore difficult to maintain. As soon as the weather takes up, the road will be put in order. We are running roads or tracks through the new area. These tracks are comfortably graded. It costs roughly 5s. per chain to clear the timber. There are certain culverts to be put in. Road construction in the district is costing £90 per mile. The construction work is being done not only for the benefit of the settlers, but also to cheapen the survey work. Hitherto in connection with land settlement surveyors have had to cut tracks wherever possible. In this case we have been able to precede the surveyors and obviate the necessity for their men having to walk long distances. The tracks are only 10 feet wide, and not at all elaborate, but they will serve their purpose. If permanent roads are eventually built, the tracks will serve as a help towards them. We propose to subdivide the land, and perhaps it will be objected that the maximum area, 200 acres, is too small. Of this area 100 acres is to be first-class land. Let me say that in my opinion there is no better land in the State than is to be found in that district. It is impossible to estimate what its value will be in another 40 or 50 years' time. The location is an ideal one to live in, and the value of the land is bound to become tremendous. Agricultural Bank officials have been in the district, and have had opportunities of investigating the soil and also of fixing the price of clearing. They have agreed to the proposals we have put forward. In our selection of settlers, we have taken unemployed married men with families.

Mr. Sleeman: Good axemen are required.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, and we have taken men physically fit for the job. This is quite a different proposition from the group settlements, under which we took anyone who came along. Here we have had a hundred men offering for every one that we wanted. Thus we are in a much better position than in the past for settling the land. Up to date we have selected a hundred men, and they have done highly satisfactory work. Outside critics of the scheme—I mean, outside this House—have rather frightened the Agricultural

Bank because of the tremendous cost of clearing the land. Mr. Moran was chosen by the Agricultural Bank to watch the institution's interests in the matter. Mr. Moran is one of the selectors of men for the job. While it is wise that the Lands Department should choose the settlers, it is also wise that the Agricultural Bank should have some say in the matter, since that institution has to finance the scheme. While I am Minister for Lands it will be the policy of the Government that where the Agricultural Bank find the money, they shall have a say in the selection of the men to go on the holdings.

Mr. McCallum: Did the Agricultural Bank have any say in the scheme itself?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes.

Mr. McCallum: Are you sure?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Quite sure. I discussed the scheme with the bank trustees before anything was done. They agreed to it. That is definite.

Mr. Willecock: Did they agree on a guarantee from the Government?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There is no guarantee whatever, except that the Treasury will find the capital for the Agricultural Bank. Surely the hon. member would not suggest that I would put up a hare-brained scheme to three men like the Agricultural Bank Trustees! I do not think I could influence them in that respect. The trustees are now prepared to finance the scheme. At one period Mr. Moran was a little bit afraid of it. As a matter of fact, I know that he discussed it with certain gentlemen, and that the outlook was considered dismal. I suggested to Mr. Moran that if he was dissatisfied the scheme should be held up until he had looked at the land. He inspected the land, and saw the men working there, with the result that he came back fully satisfied that this is one of the most promising settlement schemes in the South-West. He has gone down now to allot about 20 blocks of land to the men there. The men will take charge of their holdings under an Agricultural Bank advance, over which the Government have no control. The men will be under ordinary Agricultural Bank conditions until they are in a position to earn their living. When I stated the estimated cost of the work, my friends said it was so low that the work could not possibly be done at the price. The estimated cost per settler is £800.

Mr. McCallum: We had estimates like that for the groups when they started.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But the groups were under different conditions from these. It is estimated that the clearing and intense culture of five acres will cost £50—£10 per acre.

Mr. Willecock: How many trees are there on each acre of land?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Not many. It is open country. It might be described as park land.

Mr. McCallum: I know that country.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not think the hon. member went near this country. He may have gone along the National Park road. That road does not go through this area. The hon. member would have to walk some distance from the road before getting into any of the land that is now being thrown open for selection.

Mr. McCallum: It is not different from the rest of the country.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There is some difference.

Mr. Willecock: Tingle country is thick.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: This is not anything like so heavily timbered as the country on the east side of the river, the group side.

Mr. Willecock: It would not need to be.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The estimate I have given is based on that of the Agricultural Bank officers.

Mr. McCallum: I have been right through that country to Denmark.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But the hon. gentleman would not go through this area.

Mr. McCallum: But I would get an idea of the area, at any rate.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: When the hon. gentleman crossed the Deep River, he was in a belt of country which is to be handed over to the Forests Department for milling or other purposes. The portion to be farmed is on the east side, on the slope of the hill.

Mr. Wansbrough: Towards Thomson's?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No; in the other direction altogether. We propose to part-clear 50 acres, and the estimated cost of part-clearing 20 acres is £6 10s. per acre.

Mr. McCallum: Whose estimate is that?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is an estimate based on that of the Agricultural

Bank officials. Mr. Mazzeletti's estimate is so low that I have run a blue pencil through it.

Mr. McCallum: What kind of clearing is it?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Partial clearing, up to 9 inches. The karri and the tingle will be ringbarked.

Mr. McCallum: Will it be possible to get a plough through the land?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It will not be necessary to do much ploughing, except to kill undergrowth and scrub. And in all probability we will do the same as other people who are making a success of it, namely double cultivate it. The cost of the part clearing runs out at £267 10s. for 50 acres.

Mr. Willecock: But that is ridiculous.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Of course it is. But my friend knows what it was costing on the groups when his Government left office; it was very much less than it had been some little period earlier. And to-day we have the right class of men doing the right class of work. Many of those men have done very little else but hard work all their lives, and they are making a jolly good job of it.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: And it is all green clearing.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes; we find that the best down there. The sowing of the pasture of 50 acres we estimate may cost £2 per acre. We have set aside £100 for that. Coming to fencing, we are only going to fence those portions of the holdings which are cleared or partially cleared. So we will save certain expense when damage by fires has to be taken into consideration. The Agricultural Bank officials have a new idea for a house, one which I do not know too much about. They think they can split shingles from the timber down there, which will enable them to build a house for £120. So the total cost of making one of these farms is estimated at £800. Mr. Moran told me he felt it right to say that the estimate would not be exceeded. Consequently I think that in this State we have very little reason to complain about what is being done.

Mr. Angelo: What about the stock?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We are providing for ten head of cattle at £17 per head, or a total cost of £370.

Mr. Angelo: And is that in the sum?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. If we can make one of these farms with up to 50 acres of part clearing for £800, we will have done something worth while. Of course it did not cost the old settlers that amount of money, nor does it cost them that to-day. We have set some examples down there in the South-West by the methods we have tried out, showing how cheaply we can treat the South-West as against the cost of earlier methods.

Mr. Willecock: But why the hurry down there?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I wish we could hurry a great deal more than we are doing. I wish we could take those people and give them an opportunity straight away. In the meantime we have them on our hands without doing a day's work.

Mr. Willecock: Your estimates are highly problematical and should first be tried out.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We are trying them out. All our work is being done by contract, our roads are being cleared by piecework, and we are not restricting the men to 44 hours but allowing them to work as many hours as they like.

Mr. McCallum: The clearing of roads has always been done by piecework.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I can assure the hon. member that statement is incorrect. The whole of the work of road-clearing in this State has not been done by piecework.

Mr. McCallum: Very nearly the whole of it has been.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, a tremendous lot of it has been done by day labour. I know I am quite right in saying that.

Mr. McCallum: You are not right.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We have avoided the system that obtained under the old group settlement scheme. Side by side with our men on the groups, previously we had men on day wages. We have avoided that, and everybody is now trying to work out his own salvation according to his own ideas of labour. What I have given the House are not my own figures; indeed I have put my pencil through some that I considered too low. I have given a fair estimate of what it is suggested this land can be cleared for. It is easier to clear this land on a face. Under the old system, instead of a man taking charge of his own holding and doing his own clearing, there were 19 or 20

men at work in the group; but under this system we will allot a man his land from the day he secures it by ballot, and he will work it himself. In order to absorb some additional unemployed men, we are asking each man on a block to take one other married man with him. We are going to leave it to the Agricultural Bank to allow a man sufficient for himself and his wife and family. There have been no complaints about the Agricultural Bank's advances in the past, so we can safely leave it to the bank to make those advances under this scheme. Members must understand that it is not a Lands Department scheme, other than that we set aside the land. The scheme is being financed by the Agricultural Bank, and that without any pressure from any Minister of the Crown.

Mr. Willcock: That does not make it much better.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Will the hon. member say there has been any reason to find fault with the Agricultural Bank?

Mr. Millington: Only that they have tried to start wild-cat schemes.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: And some of them have been very profitable to the State. Men like Mr. McLarty, Mr. Cook and Mr. Moran are not likely to make mistakes, for they have a full knowledge of the mistakes made in the past.

Mr. Willcock: Their professional reputation as bankers will hang on this scheme.

Mr. McCallum: The Minister has certainly put the responsibility on them.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: And they have accepted the responsibility. They are going to find the money.

Mr. Angelo: Have you had the opinions of the local settlers?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There are not many local settlers whose opinions we could use. I do not know whether we need worry too much about it. After all, the land that has been cleared there by the local settler has been cleared for a long period, so I do not think we need worry very much about this. The group settlement areas are on the opposite side of the river, and we know what has been done by group settlement down there.

Mr. Willcock: What has group settlement cost there?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Well, we know what has been written off.

Mr. Willcock: But what has clearing under group settlement conditions cost?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: One farm on the opposite side of the river has cost £1,300 for the erection of the house and the partial clearing of 35 acres. We assert that if it were given to these people under piece work conditions they could do it very much cheaper than the old settler did. And those people were quite unaccustomed to Australian conditions, while we contend that the work can be done by Australian bushmen cheaper than it has been done in the past.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: How many cows will each settler keep?

Mr. Millington: Ten. The Minister said so.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I did not say it. Some members may find it very annoying if this scheme works out more successfully than is expected.

Mr. Willcock: No, no.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Well, I hope they will not. Yet it has been suggested that the bridge was going to stop people from crossing the river, and again that I said we were going to feed ten cows. I never made that statement. What I said was that provision had been made for the purchase of ten cows.

Mr. Millington: Yes, that is right.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I hope when we do reach that stage there will be additional money available for additional clearing. It does not pay those people to have large areas of the South-West country with the green timber remaining. So I hope that when the pasture is sufficiently far advanced for the carrying of ten cows, there will be additional clearing under way.

Mr. Millington: Did you ask the bank trustees when they estimated these places would be self-supporting?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: On the lines of the Hester group, it will be three or four years. I propose to have something to say about the values of land and the writing down by the board. I do not want members to run away with the idea that the boards that have been appointed have been able truly to determine the value of the land they have written down. I have here files relating to two properties which I inspected with a view to getting some idea of the costs and what we might expect to have

to write down. There was one property, the name of whose owner I do not desire to mention here, but which I will give to any member who desires it, that was thrown up and discarded by the board as unsuitable. It was not in a place where it was possible to tack it on to another holding. Having hawked it a bit, the board got £468 for it. It had about 27 acres cleared, a house, dairy and all necessary equipment provided for these farms. A few days after it was sold for £468 the new owner was offered £1,000 for it. When I was there he had 12 cows running on the property, was still milking them, and had plenty of feed, and it was quite possible for him to set aside enough to tide him over the dry period. Another property was written down to £1,300. I do not know whether my values can be relied upon, but I suggest it was well worth £2,000. There were 38 acres cleared—it was one of those areas that had been increased by the absorption of another area—and altogether there was sufficient area cleared for the running of 40 cows, and still to leave sufficient to cut for dry period.

Mr. McCallum: Do you wish us to infer that the board did not know their job?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, I only say those properties were reduced too much. A little while ago a settler sold his property for £300 in equity. I say that £300 belongs to the people. So we must not be too much alarmed at what has been done in the South-West in the past. I hope to place these people in a very happy position. If they do what it is intended they should do, they will certainly come out all right, and will have the satisfaction of knowing they have played their part in the development of the South-West.

Mr. Willcock: We have heard that pious hope for about ten years now.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But I am speaking of land in the neighbourhood of the Hester group. The Hester group was started by Mr. Angwin before he left to take up the position of Agent-General. It is not one of the old groups, but one of the latest groups. I propose to give a resume of what is going on in the Lands Department. The work, of course, has been carried out principally by my predecessor. I regret to say there is a falling off in the applications for land. There is not the money forthcoming to-day, and moreover we have

not land available close to existing railways which we could sell and turn to good account. Hence the pronounced falling off in the applications. During the year the conditional alienation applications numbered 3,065 for an acreage of 1,365,601. For pastoral leases there were 100 applications for 5,874,482 acres. It will be seen that there has been a considerable falling off in the figures. In the previous year the conditional alienation applications numbered 6,114 for 2,209,837 acres, and pastoral leases numbered 164 applications for 12,685,760 acres. The number of applications allotted by the Lands Department during the year was 1,149, and the number of new settlers 1,433. Loans approved by the Agricultural Bank amounted to £694,771. Of that total £405,291 was approved for clearing 374,755 acres of virgin country, and £289,000 for other permanent improvements, stock, machinery and crop advances. Of the last-mentioned sum £78,000 was advanced for fallow. The wheat yield last year was 39,000,000 bushels and constituted a record. There is every reason to expect a much larger yield this year. The number of sheep in the State at the end of last year was 9,556,823, and it is estimated that the figures this year will be over 10,000,000. A considerable number of farmers in the agricultural areas are going in for sheep because it is more necessary now to combine sheep raising with wheat farming than was the case in the past. We are not carrying out experimental plots this year, except those arranged by the previous Minister at Dartmoor. It was proposed that we should put one in at Forrestania, but owing to the distance from the railway and the difficulty of getting water it has been held over. In the meantime investigatory work is being done by Dr. Teakle. Surveys are taking place as rapidly as possible in the South-West, and particular attention is being paid to land owned by the Crown adjacent to the railway system. There is, however, very little Crown land within 12½ miles of a railway. It is essential, of course, that we should have reservations in this State, and nobody would suggest for one moment that we should not set aside land for posterity in view of the fact that we can do to-day what they would not be able to do in the years to come. I wish to tell the House what the position is with regard to repurchased estates. Our friends always tell us that we should acquire properties adjoining railways, but the land



that we have repurchased has not proved the great advantage that is suggested by our friends it should have proved.

Mr. McCallum: Whom do you mean by "our friends"?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Our friends who talk about us.

Mr. McCallum: You are not referring to us?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Oh no; people outside. I want members to realise that when we purchase estates we have to add interest, and it becomes a pretty heavy burden on the man who acquires an area. Nearly every property that has been bought in the last 15 or 20 years has become a burden on the taxpayers. The position in the Lands Department to-day, as far as arrears of rent are concerned, is causing a fair amount of anxiety.

Mr. Willcock: The same thing applies to Crown lands.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Not so much. If we acquire a property at £2 an acre and a settler takes 1,000 acres, it costs him over £75 for the half year, or £150 a year has to be found by him from the day he selects it. Crown land is a different proposition. For the first five years a settler pays interest on his survey, and if he takes up land in the South-West he gets 160 acres for nothing, only paying for the survey. Those conditions have prevailed for a long time past. The position is that the man who acquires land from a repurchased estate is saddled with a load of £150 a year to start off with, and if he has to borrow money to carry out improvements he becomes overloaded before he makes a commencement.

Mr. Willcock: A man who buys land from a repurchased estate should have some capital.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member knows very well that most of the land has been selected by people without money.

Mr. Willcock: Not land from repurchased estates.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I was challenged by the Press and by some settlers in this State that I said something that was not endorsed by the people, to the effect that I was not going to purchase estates and sell to people without money.

Mr. Willcock: You did not correct it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I did correct it.

Mr. Willcock: Anyway, it is nice to have the correction now.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I said that we would acquire properties so long as people who selected that land from us had a little capital of their own. It is essential that a man who takes over such a property should have capital to enable him to work it. One wonders sometimes whether hon. members realise what the financial position of the State is. If they only understand what the financial position of the Commonwealth is, they will realise how that position must be reflected in the finances of the State. It is not a question of we have not done this, or we will not do the other; it is a question that we cannot do it because we have not the money. Therefore we cannot buy properties wholesale along existing railways.

Mr. Willcock: You gave that out as part of your policy.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: What I said was that as far as I was concerned, I was not going to use the people's money to repurchase estates and place men without capital on that land. Everybody should endorse that. That was what I said at the deputation at which the Press were present, and the notes taken there will prove it. Those people never had a chance from the start, and when members say that we should acquire properties along existing railways, I draw their attention to the fact that we have an Act of Parliament that enables us to purchase certain lands under certain conditions. Hon. members opposite never acquired any land.

Mr. Munsie: I should think we would not, with the amendment we had to accept from the other House.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Nearly all the properties along existing railways that are unused are freehold, and we have no right at all to touch them. The only way in which we could touch them would be to acquire them and we have not the money to do that.

Mr. Munsie: You would be very foolish if you did under the existing legislation.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Again, we have not the people with money who would take the properties off our hands. We are doing the next best thing; we are giving land free under the usual land settlement conditions to settlers going to the South-West part of the State and giving them Agricultural Bank assistance to enable

them to establish their farms. The member for Guildford-Midland (Hon. W. D. Johnson) was on a commission with me and I remember his saying that that was the system under which the lands in the South-West should have been settled. We are giving settlers opportunity to prove that settlement under those conditions can be successful. In the South-western part of the State, besides the Nornalup section, there are others to be thrown open for selection, and we are preserving to the Crown all marketable timber on the holdings. The Minister for Forests is putting sleeper cutters on some of the holdings to cut sleepers simultaneously with the men who are clearing. We are protecting the State as far as we can and protecting the rights of the Crown in respect of marketable timber left on those holdings. There are quite a number that have been cut over two or three times, and if we employ men to cut sleepers we are providing them with employment, and they are producing an article which, if not saleable at the present time, will be saleable later on. I should like to say a few words about migration. Hon. members are aware that migration has fallen off and that very few people are coming to the State now. The only migrants arriving are those that have been nominated from this end. There has been a marked reduction in the estimates of the Migration Department. Nearly the whole of the staff has left and there remain only one or two. Before long there will be very little need for even those hands unless things brighten up considerably. It is essential to keep the staff together because there is a certain amount of after-care, and the only means of attending to it is to utilise the services of the officers we have who can be employed also in collecting money that is outstanding. I shall be prepared to give hon. members any information they desire to have on these Estimates.

Mr. Sleeman: Have you got an estimate of the marketable timber at Nornalup?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, I have not. I will take the hon. member's figures. We are reserving all the marketable timber for the Forests Department. That is the timber along the Frankland River and a big strip of country along the Deep River.

Mr. McCallum: For some time past the foreshore of those rivers has been reserved for some distance back.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In those areas there have not been any lands reserved outside the National Park. Many years ago the foreshore along National Park was reserved. It is freehold property along the river and along the north side, but once you leave National Park it is all Crown land. If the hon. member will accept my invitation, he can come to my office and peruse the plan that discloses the classification of the land, the timber on it, and other particulars. In fact, I issue the invitation to hon. members generally. The only desire of the Lands Department is to give the fullest information. I have given the Committee complete information, and I realise that hon. members themselves must accept their share of the responsibility for the scheme.

Mr. Willcock: My word, they have to!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No one appreciates that more than I do. This is no hair-brained scheme of my own. We have thoroughly investigated it, and we are protecting the people's capital that will be invested in it. I invite members to inspect the plans for themselves. In fact, there is nothing to prevent them from going to Nornalup to see the work that is being carried out. It is in an elementary stage but it is proposed to send 200 men down there and eventually to have 500.

Mr. Willcock: Five hundred holdings?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, I have indicated the number of holdings, but eventually we will have 500 men employed down there. During the summer months the men will be able to take their wives there and thus enjoy a congenial holiday. It is not proposed to ask them down during the winter months when conditions are not comfortable. In fact, we are not advocating that they should take their wives there during that period, nor are we encouraging them to take their wives.

Mr. Willcock: What do you mean by that?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We are not encouraging them to take their wives there at the present time. We would not be stupid enough to do that; the men will be able to please themselves. I am hoping everything will turn out as well as the scheme appears to be at present. I am only too willing to give hon. members all the information possible, because there is nothing to hide.

**MR. McCALLUM** (South Fremantle) [8.48]: There is no doubt that the Lands Department represents one of the most important activities of the State at the present juncture. In fact, I regard it as the most important of the State's activities because the future of Western Australia is founded on the development of the agricultural industry. I am sorry that the Vote for the Department of Agriculture went through the other night without an explanation from the Minister. It went through with a rush, and had it not been that the Premier indicated that the Minister desired to go to Esperance and had to get away, I do not think the vote would have gone through so quickly. Although we were under that impression, the Minister is still here. We must admit that the Lands Department controls activities that mean everything to Australia to-day, because it is from the products of land settlement—our wheat and our wool—that we hope to get out of our difficulties, and the fact remains that at the moment those commodities cannot be produced at a profit. There is no market for them in which they can be sold at a profit under existing conditions. Unless there is some radical change, it would appear from the present outlook that there will be a tremendous setback throughout Australia to the production of wheat and wool. Instead of launching into new schemes and spending new money in facing new problems, the time of the Government and of the various State departments should be directed and, I predict, will be fully occupied very soon, in keeping those we have at present settled on the land, in possession of their blocks.

The Minister for Lands: We are doing that too.

**MR. McCALLUM**: The Minister will find during the next 12 months that the problems he will have to face in that respect, will not only fully occupy his attention but the activities of his department as well. We know that the position throughout the wheat belt at present is desperate. Wheat cannot possibly be produced at present prices; the sheep man cannot continue breeding sheep at the price available in the market; the wool man cannot continue with his operations in the face of existing conditions. What can the average farmer in the wheat

belt see ahead of him at the moment? He has heavy obligations to meet in the near future and in February, when he will have to meet his promissory notes, he will be in for a trying time. The whole efforts of the Government and their departmental officers should be behind these men in an effort to assist them to more firmly establish themselves and to make sure that they are tided over their difficult situation. Storekeepers and merchants are pressing farmers on all sides, and there will be a scramble for the spoils immediately the crop is taken off.

The Minister for Lands: Are you not anticipating the legislation that we will present?

**MR. McCALLUM**: I do not know what the Government intend to do. I know that notice of their intention to present certain Bills has been given, but I do not know what the Bills will provide for. The mere passing of Bills will not overcome the difficulty, for money has to be found. No matter what Bill is placed on the statute-book, money will be the real necessity. The Minister has impressed upon us the difficulties of the financial position, and has pointed out what confronts not only Western Australia, but the Commonwealth as a whole. If the Government are to find the necessary money to keep those already on the land in a position to continue growing wheat and breeding sheep, then Ministers will be heavily taxed in coping with that task, without entering into new settlement schemes at such a juncture.

The Minister for Lands: We have to feed the unemployed too.

**MR. McCALLUM**: The Minister is a member of the Government that promised to find work for all.

The Minister for Lands: Let us get away from that point, and deal with the problem that confronts us.

**MR. McCALLUM**: At the present time there must easily be ten times as much unemployment as there was when that promise was made.

**MR. H. W. MANN**: And you criticise the Government because they try to fulfil their promise!

**MR. McCALLUM**: They have done very little in comparison with what they promised.

The Minister for Lands: And whatever we do, you say is wrong.

Mr. McCALLUM: The Government have done nothing in comparison with what they promised; their efforts are but a shadow compared with what they said they would do. There will be the necessity not only to lift the present unemployed from the labour market but, should the finances of the country be still further involved in the opening up of new land settlement and trying out new men on holdings, there will not be sufficient money available for the Government to keep those at present on the land in possession of their holdings. What will become of them? Will the men at present on their blocks be stranded or forced off their holdings? The Governments of the various States entered into an agreement to the effect that the limited amount of money available would be invested only in schemes and works that would return rapidly interest and sinking fund on the amount expended. I have always lent my support to the development of the South-West. I am firmly convinced that when the South-West is finally settled, it will be the most permanently developed part of the State, and will be one of the richest portions, as it undoubtedly is. At the same time, I have not held the view that money invested in the South-West will reap a return quickly. It means many years before we will be able to get our money back from investments in the South-West. That is what experience has shown. Listening to the Minister for Lands to-night, one need only to have closed his eyes to imagine he was listening to a debate a decade back when we heard the same glowing promises about group settlement, the same estimates, the same hopes and the same bright picture.

The Minister for Lands: I did not paint any bright picture.

Mr. McCALLUM: We had then the same sort of talk that we now hear in connection with the Nornalup scheme. When the Minister says that he expects the dairy farmers there to be self-supporting in four or five years, he speaks against all the experience gained in South-West settlement.

The Minister for Lands: What about the Hester group?

Mr. McCALLUM: We have more fortunate places in the South-West.

The Minister for Lands: Where?

Mr. McCALLUM: I should say from Manjilup to Pemberton and around Denmark.

The Minister for Lands: Have you been to Hester?

Mr. McCALLUM: I have been through practically all the groups. I do not know that Hester has made any great strides during the last few months.

The Minister for Lands: It has.

Mr. McCALLUM: None of the group areas has proved self-supporting within the period originally estimated, not by many years. Although at the time we were told that they would have been self-supporting at a period that has passed by many years, some of those groups are not even now within measurable distance of that goal. The Minister will find that his estimates are just as wide of the mark. The whole history of land settlement in the South-West is against his prediction.

The Minister for Lands: You admit that the conditions of settlement are utterly different.

Mr. McCALLUM: Yes, and when the Minister talks about piecework and day labour, I want to remind him that it was the Labour Government that altered the policy.

The Minister for Lands: I am not criticising Governments.

Mr. McCALLUM: The Minister referred to the question of day labour versus contract. It was the Mitchell Government that instituted the scheme for the settlement of the South-West on a sustenance and wages basis. We altered that, and put the settlers on their own mettle. We placed them under the Agricultural Bank. So far as we can learn that policy has been considerably departed from, and a lot of the men have been put back on to sustenance. To-day those men are drawing sustenance although we put them on their mettle. There is nothing more pronounced, as one goes through the groups, than the impression that once some of the settlers were removed from sustenance conditions and placed on their own resources, their group holdings were no longer attractive to them.

The Minister for Lands: Why did you not get rid of them?

Mr. McCALLUM: We did; we altered the scheme and put these men under the Agricultural Bank. I do not know whether there has been an alteration in that policy since, but I know we effected a change as

quickly as possible while we were in office. I recently asked a question about the number of group blocks that were at present vacant. I ask any hon. member to read the answer that I received and then ask himself whether he can understand it. That answer was framed in such a way as to make it impossible to be understood. I put the question plainly to the Minister for Lands: Is it not more sensible to have the vacant group blocks settled before we launch out into a new scheme?

The Minister for Lands: But did you not condemn them?

Mr. McCALLUM: I am not talking about condemned holdings, but deserted holdings. That was what my question referred to, and I ask hon. members to look at the answer, which is a Chinese puzzle. I am sorry that the ex-Minister for Lands is not present because he informed me that the answer did not convey the real position at all and he would have been able to inform the Committee of the situation as it was when he left office. When the Minister talks about roads being provided at a cost of £90 a mile, he must refer to tracks only.

The Minister for Lands: That is so.

Mr. Wansbrough: They will be useless in the winter time.

Mr. McCALLUM: I was just going to point out that fact. That country is so wet that during the time we were in office some of the settlers were stranded for weeks on end. We had to make arrangements to send supplies to them by means of pack horses. Any other method would have been absolutely impossible. It is useless to suggest that the settlers can be served with tracks that cost £90 a mile. They must have macadamised roads that can be used throughout the year.

The Minister for Lands: People there have done without macadamised roads for years.

Mr. McCALLUM: That is all right for the summer, but will not do in winter. When the Minister talks about crossing the river, I do not know if the bridge is there; I do not know the condition it is in at the moment, but when I went through it was not too secure. There will be no crossing that river in the winter months.

The Minister for Lands: Why not?

Mr. McCALLUM: Because it will be impossible. If the Minister views it from the conditions that exist in the summer months—

The Minister for Lands: Why could not a man cross the river?

Mr. McCALLUM: He would have to get to the bridge first of all. The Minister said that even if the bridge were not there, a man could cross the river.

The Minister for Lands: In the summer months.

Mr. McCALLUM: That would be during only a limited period of the year.

The Minister for Lands: The river does not rise very high.

Mr. McCALLUM: The river could not be crossed in the winter months. It would be impossible to approach the river, much less to cross it.

Mr. Willcock: Which river is it?

Mr. McCALLUM: The Frankland.

The Minister for Lands: I am referring to that portion further up where the group settlements are.

Mr. McCALLUM: The settlements are considerably higher up than Bellanger's place. To estimate that the settlers can be established for £800 is far below the mark. I believe the original estimate for each group settler was about £1,000.

Mr. Millington: They started off at £750 and got to £2,000 or more.

Mr. McCALLUM: Yes. With the experience we have gained during the years settlement has been proceeding in the South-West, it should be clear that the estimate is altogether too conservative. I hope it will be realised.

The Minister for Lands: We do not clear the land as we used to do.

Mr. McCALLUM: Not for many years has it been cleared on the face. In the early stages, when we had expensive tree-pullers and were clearing the land on the face, it cost £100 an acre. That method has not been adopted for years. I do not know of any part of the State settled under the group system that has heavier or bigger timber than the country around Nornalup. There are to be found the giant karri and the tingle-tingle, as well as dense undergrowth. The clearing in that district will cost very big money indeed. The district has a heavy rainfall. In no month of the year is it without rain and the scheme, involving as it will costly roads to reach the railway, will be a very expensive one. In view of the financial outlook, and the desperate position confronting wheat and wool growers, and the amount of back-

ing that the State will have to give them to keep them on their holdings, it would be far sounder policy for the Government to conserve their resources in order to keep present settlers on the land, rather than launch out into new schemes of this sort. I think the Government are making a grave error. This is another of the bright pictures that have been painted for us. Even the Minister cannot hold out hope of getting quick returns from the scheme. No one would argue that 10 cows would give a settler a living. Ten cows might be enough to keep a home together, but if that is all the settlers have to look forward to—

The Minister for Lands: That will be the starting point.

Mr. McCALLUM: It will be the starting point of a heavy obligation. We have to face the position squarely and realise that we have made a loss of over £5,000,000 in that part of the State. Every scheme of land settlement in that area should be minutely examined and tested before any substantial obligation is incurred. Otherwise it might prove equally as disastrous as group settlement has been, involving the State in further heavy loss. The Government should conserve their resources. They will want every pound they can get to assist the wheat and pastoral industries to tide over the trying times ahead of them. Unless something is done for them, there will be chaos early in the new year. If the bottom falls out of the wheat and wool growing industries and the settlers leave their holdings, the foundation of the State will be gone.

Mr. Angelo: Have not we reached bottom yet?

Mr. McCALLUM: It is doubtful whether we have. The price of wheat is down again to-day, and wool at the latest sales was down 10 to 15 per cent. Only a rash man would predict when the bottom was likely to be reached. No one can say what the future has in store. So uncertain is it that it behoves the Government to walk warily before incurring new obligations which might involve the State in substantial financial burdens.

The Minister for Lands: We are feeling our way very carefully.

Mr. McCALLUM: To send a couple of hundred men down there is not feeling your way. To me it seems rather rash.

The Minister for Lands: That is the total number.

Mr. Willecock: That will mean a quarter of a million of money.

The Minister for Lands: Over what period?

Mr. Willecock: Eighteen months.

Mr. McCALLUM: I hope the Minister will assure the Committee that everything done at Nornalup has the full approval of the Agricultural Bank trustees.

The Minister for Lands: That is so.

Mr. McCALLUM: Those officials carry the responsibility. The Minister has thrown the full responsibility upon them. We should be apprised of their views, because to them we look for approval of the scheme. The Minister says they approve of the scheme.

Mr. Angelo: Is it their job to approve of the scheme?

Mr. McCALLUM: They will have the control of the expenditure of public funds. The Government have to find the money, but the actual expending of it will rest with them.

Mr. Angelo: You are really asking the bank trustees to father the scheme.

Mr. McCALLUM: I put it to the Minister by way of interjection whether he had gone to the trustees and said, "We are going on with this scheme and we want you to come in," or whether he had invited them to say what they thought of the scheme.

The Minister for Lands: I have already answered that.

Mr. McCALLUM: But the question put by the member for Gascoyne indicates otherwise.

Mr. Angelo: I desire to be satisfied.

Mr. McCALLUM: The Minister has made it clear to my mind that the bank trustees have fully approved of the scheme, without pressure by the Government, and are prepared to father it.

Mr. H. W. Mann: The Minister said that when he told us the trustees were taking the responsibility of selecting the men.

Mr. McCALLUM: I do not think the fact of the trustees taking the responsibility of selecting the men goes far.

Mr. H. W. Mann: I do.

The Minister for Lands: It is a very important factor.

Mr. McCALLUM: If the trustees were told they had to take the scheme and finance it, it would be a vital point. Then they would insist upon having the right to select the men.

Mr. H. W. Mann: Do not you think much depends upon the class of man who goes there?

Mr. McCALLUM: Yes, but I also think there are other features equally vital. How long will elapse before the settlers are self-supporting? How long will it be before they can make a living for themselves and their families?

Mr. H. W. Mann: That will depend upon the men who go there. One man would do it in five years and another would not do it in 10 years.

Mr. McCALLUM: Possibly the best of men would take six or seven years. Would the hon. member favour a scheme knowing that it would take six or seven years before the settlers could get a living out of it? With the huge obligations we are facing in the pastoral and agricultural industries, would he favour shouldering a new scheme that could not be made reproductive within six or seven years? Is that sound policy? The present outlook should warn us against sanctioning any such proposal. The Government have agreed with the Governments of other States that loan money shall be expended only on schemes that will be immediately reproductive. That cannot be said of this scheme. Therefore it should be carefully investigated before it is carried too far. The Government would be better advised to conserve the money to keep men on the land who are already there and to consolidate their positions.

[Mr. Panton took the Chair.]

MR. MILLINGTON (Mt. Hawthorn) [9.13]: I feel very much perturbed at the alteration of the policy of the Agricultural Bank. The Minister has told us that the Agricultural Bank will finance the scheme at Nornalup under its usual policy. He said there would be no departure from the accepted policy of the bank. If that were so, there would be no objection to it, but I am not satisfied that it is so. By the time this scheme is got under way, I think the policy will more nearly resemble that adopted by the Industries Assistance Board. The Agricultural Bank policy is a sound one. Under it we do not pay the expenses of a man to go on the land and he receives no sustenance. He has to go on the land at his own expense, and the value of the work he does is more than the amount of

money advanced to him by the bank. Originally, when the Agricultural Bank advanced 20s. for clearing, the guarantee of the value of the work done was 22s. 6d. or 25s. an acre. The man who went on the land was sustained while the land was being developed. He, therefore, had an interest in it at once, because the work was worth more than he received. Under the disastrous group settlement scheme exactly the opposite was the case. Whatever excuse there might be in prospect for considering a scheme like the group settlement scheme, in the light of our experience that excuse no longer holds good. We ought to know first of all what it will actually cost to settle these people in the Nornalup district. The land is said to be most fertile, and we are told that it is unequalled anywhere in the State. If it is as good as we are told, and we know what the rainfall is, it must be growing very big timber.

Mr. Willcock: It is the biggest timber in the State.

Mr. MILLINGTON: If it does not carry heavy timber, it cannot be as good as the Minister contends it is.

Mr. Willcock: I saw a tingle down there 30 feet in diameter.

Mr. MILLINGTON: Tingle and karri grow on good land. I cannot exactly identify the locality in question, but I cannot help thinking the clearing costs must be very heavy. The Minister suggests that this scheme will be immediately reproductive.

The Minister for Lands: I did not suggest it.

Mr. MILLINGTON: Not to-day, but we are told that money is to be put into schemes that will be immediately reproductive. That is the Government policy. I should like the opinion of the trustees of the Agricultural Bank as to how soon this will be reproductive. I am not sure the bank has not been shouldered with the mistakes of the group settlement, that it is not having pushed on to it the responsibility originally undertaken by the group settlement scheme. If that is so, the credit of the bank will be seriously interfered with. The disastrous Industries Assistance Board was forced upon the State by a set of circumstances over which we had no control. I do know, however, that the trustees of the bank, and particularly the managing director, object to the extension of that scheme,

and are anxious to close it as early as possible. Recently published figures show they are quite right. Just as in the case of the group settlement scheme, men are backed who should not be backed. Before the authorities know where they are they find themselves obliged to carry these men on. I had it from the managing director some time ago that a good deal of the wheat grown under the Industries Assistance Board scheme cost 10s. a bushel. That would not happen under the policy of the Agricultural Bank. I am not satisfied that the trustees will be able to apply their policy to the scheme that has now been propounded. I fail to see how they can do so.

Mr. H. W. Mann: Do you suggest the Government have brought undue influence to bear upon the bank?

Mr. MILLINGTON: I am not suggesting anything of the kind. I am only examining the position. If the hon. member has anything to say he had better get up and say it.

The CHAIRMAN: Hon. members should address the Chair.

Mr. Angelo: You are threatening the House.

Mr. MILLINGTON: The hon. member has threatened me. I am not imputing anything. All the same, I should like to know whether it is possible to apply the policy of the bank, as it affects the development of the wheat belt and other areas, to this particular scheme. The Nornalup proposition provides for taking men without money and putting them upon the land. First of all they have to get there, and then the land has to be cleared. The old settler in the State took up his own land, and was prepared to accept full responsibility for it. The men under this scheme will be the same as the group settlers. The whole responsibility will be upon the Government. Every time the authorities went near the groups the settlers asked what help was going to be given to them. They said the Government had put them there, and must accept responsibility for doing so. We know the disastrous results that have followed through many of the settlers who formed part of the scheme.

The Minister for Lands: I am only sorry I did not make myself understood.

Mr. MILLINGTON: I will make myself understood. The Minister will have to put up a better scheme than he has done to

satisfy me that this is something the trustees of the bank have willingly taken on. We know that loan moneys are practically non est. At this time when there is a dearth of loan funds I cannot understand the logic of entering upon a scheme which, instead of being immediately reproductive, cannot reach that stage for five or six years. Members representing the South-West, and knowing what it costs to open up country similar to this, will endorse what I say. No one would dream of suggesting that even a picked settler could go into a district like this, clear the land, secure the necessary stock and immediately make a success of his undertaking. The Minister suggests that everything will be all right after the first ten cows are supplied. He knows that cannot be so. No man can live anywhere in this country on ten cows. If that is the idea, the Government are heading for disaster. No one, in fact, can make a living at dairying until he has reached the 20-cow stage. I leave that to the judgment of members representing the South-West.

Mr. Willcock: It is difficult to find a cow that will return £20 a year.

Mr. MILLINGTON: It is extremely difficult to get suitable cows for the districts that are already established. That is one of the reasons why the dairying industry is not on a better footing in this State. I said the other night one could count on the fingers of two hands the herds in this State with which one could be satisfied. The Government are not the best buyers. It is extraordinarily difficult to secure cows that are suitable for dairying. Those who have them are hanging on to them and selling the "scrubbers." For some time to come there must be a demand for first-class dairy stock on the group settlements and other holdings. The man is an optimist who thinks that any number of good cows are available for the Nornalup scheme. I do not think they can readily be produced in the Eastern States, and we certainly have not the opportunity of acquiring them here. The first thing to do is to place upon a proper footing those areas already taken up as dairy farms. Until they are stocked up, we should cry a halt in any fresh undertakings of the kind. Any private enterprise which desires to develop this land can do so. The Government will do pretty well if they can supply the requisite stock to those already engaged in the industry, and particularly those to whom



they owe an obligation, namely the group settlers. I have said I thought there was some confusion with regard to the Agricultural Bank policy, and that instead of being this policy, it would be along the lines of the Industries Assistance Board. Under the former policy a man cannot get money until he earns it. Under the latter policy, money will be advanced to the settler. He will therefore become an I.A.B. client and be on sustenance.

The Minister for Lands: You are twisting what I have said.

Mr. MILLINGTON: I defy the Minister to say anything to the contrary. The settler cannot live on air and he must have sustenance.

The Minister for Lands: He will not get it.

Mr. MILLINGTON: What would happen if one of the unemployed were put down there?

Mr. Angelo: There is plenty of fish for him.

Mr. MILLINGTON: The bank would have to back him.

The Minister for Lands: Men are there already.

Mr. MILLINGTON: The settler would under the contract system begin to clear his land. The Minister knows it will be some years before the land returns the money that is put into it. The settler will not be able to pay interest on the capital, sustain himself, and build up his holding until he gets a few cows. When he reaches the ten-cow stage he still will not have a living and will have to meet his many liabilities.

Mr. Wansbrough: He will have to meet his liabilities to the bank.

Mr. MILLINGTON: By the time he is able to keep 20 cows, more than three years will have elapsed. Then I suppose he will be in the position of the group settlers and refuse to pay his interest. This interest is the last thing any of them seem to think they ought to pay. Whether these new settlers believe in it or not, they will certainly be unable to meet their obligations to the Agricultural Bank, as is the case with other people who have been backed by the bank. It is well to understand that this is an extension of the pernicious I.A.B. scheme. As a result of the drought of 1914 there was some justification for the establishment of the I.A.B., but there is now no excuse for walking into such a position with our eyes open. We are

not being forced by circumstances to apply it to the South-West. The people must understand what this scheme means. It is the 1930 phase of the group settlement scheme with which the Premier is so enamoured.

The Minister for Lands: Someone else was also, and the scheme was extended.

Mr. MILLINGTON: I think only two members of the previous Cabinet were at all enthusiastic for an extension of the scheme. This cheap imitation of Agricultural Bank policy does not overcome the difficulty. Seeing that the bank is to take all this upon its shoulders, I want to know whether it will have the right to get rid of unsuitable men or whether it will have to carry them on as a liability. We know what happened in the case of the group settlements. Hundreds of pounds were spent before it was found that certain settlers were not suitable. Someone else then had to take on the liability which represented double the value of the work that had been done. The difference had to be written off.

Mr. Willcock: Anyone would think there was no interest to pay on written down capital.

Mr. MILLINGTON: Two of the trustees of the bank are excellent judges of agricultural land. One is considered the best judge of values of that type of land in the State. Nevertheless, I do not think he would consider himself a good judge of land values in the South-West, nor say that he was an authority on settlement in the South-West. Although these men are competent to deal with agricultural properties I hardly think they themselves would consider they were expert judges so far as South-West settlement is concerned. Care will have to be exercised in that respect. One of the trustees, I know, has had experience in the South-West. The Agricultural Bank trustees have done good work in districts they know and under conditions they understand; but to place on them the whole responsibility of this scheme, which is under new conditions, will in my opinion lead to disappointing results. I quite agree with the Minister that that country will be beautiful country in 40 years' time. I remember Senator Johnston saying in this House that the South-West is a splendid country for the third and fourth generations.

Mr. Willcock: He bought land in the South-West wherever he thought he could build an hotel.

Mr. MILLINGTON: It is not a country that can be settled expeditiously. The right class of settler is required for it, and above all the man with the determination to develop a holding, not on the sustenance or wage or dole system. This job is a family job. I agree that when the holding has been knocked into shape, it is the finest holding in the world. The member for South Fremantle referred to the existing liability of the Agricultural Bank. I sympathise with the idea of putting unemployed on to work, but there is upon the Agricultural Bank a responsibility to keep in work the farmers already on the land. That is even more important. I would like the Minister's assurance that all applications which the bank would approve, such as applications for fallowing, will be granted.

The Minister for Lands: They have been granted.

Mr. MILLINGTON: I have heard that some have not been approved. It is certainly better business for the State to finance for fallowing on a developed holding than to finance for developing the class of land that takes longest to develop. The Agricultural Bank authorities, if left to themselves, would say, "We have all the responsibility we can face to finance our ordinary business, without entering into new business." I understand that all banks are disposed to adopt that attitude. They say, "This is the worst time possible for experimenting."

Mr. Willcock: For opening up new accounts.

Mr. MILLINGTON: When all the world is short of money, when the only excuse for spending Loan funds is that there will be an immediate return, the Government are entering into a scheme which will be of a most protracted character. They ask the country to approve that scheme. I do not think the country will approve. For the purposes of the scheme the Agricultural Bank will be forced to abandon their usual policy of safety and enter upon the Industries Assistance Board's line of policy, which has proved disastrous. Instead of going 300 odd miles down into the South-West, we could develop other districts cheaply. With a little assistance men would be prepared to take up holdings in the Wanneroo district, for example. That district has no railway, and until recently it had not a decent road. During the last year or so a

road has been constructed 20 miles out. Plenty of land is available in that district.

The Minister for Lands: Crown land?

Mr. MILLINGTON: Plenty of land provided the road were taken out another 10 or 12 miles.

The Minister for Lands: Is it Crown land?

Mr. MILLINGTON: There is plenty of land to be developed if the road is carried out. Wanneroo is not in my electorate, but I have visited the district frequently. The only thing the Wanneroo people ask for is a road.

Mr. Angelo: Who will develop the land? The people who own it?

Mr. MILLINGTON: There would be no difficulty so long as there was access by road to the markets. In the Wanneroo district there are good swamp lands, not expensive to drain. Most of the swamps there are drained naturally.

Mr. Wells: Is this privately-owned land?

Mr. MILLINGTON: There is a big Government reserve in the district.

The Minister for Lands: A class "A" reserve?

Mr. MILLINGTON: The Minister could retain the land not suitable for agriculture. The Wanneroo settlers put up a proposition to the previous Government—

The Minister for Agriculture: The previous Government turned it down flat.

Mr. MILLINGTON: I understood that the ex-Minister for Lands was favourable to it. I know that the present Leader of the Opposition was. After taking out of that reserve the lands suitable for closer settlement, there would still be plenty left for the needs of the district. Independently of that aspect, I ask the Government to assist the Wanneroo settlers by an extension of the road. The extension would not be very expensive. With that facility settlers would be found to develop the district. The Minister for Works had a look at Wanneroo, and I believe he was much impressed by the possibilities of closer settlement there—not closer settlement on the usual terms of the Government draining swamps and doing all the work. If road facilities were provided, plenty of people would be prepared to go on the Wanneroo country and develop it.

Mr. Angelo: What would be produced there?

Mr. MILLINGTON: There are in the district holdings forfeited by returned soldiers. I know a man who took up one of those holdings, built a stone house and stables, has his own motor truck, cultivates five or six acres growing vegetables, poultry and pigs, and keeps a few fowls.

The Minister for Lands: Why did not your Government go there instead of to Forrestania?

Mr. MILLINGTON: Our Government built 20 miles of road that had been waiting 100 years to be built. The Wanneroo settlers used to take two days to get to market; now they get there in an hour. It is a pretty big job to develop Western Australia, but there are easier things to do than to develop Western Australia's hardest district, Nornalup. I suggest that there are easier districts much nearer to the metropolitan market. It is not my fault that land was not acquired in the Wanneroo district. I regard it as much more suitable for closer settlement than the Peel Estate. I am glad to have the Minister's assurance that despite the fact of loan moneys being scarce and the Agricultural Bank being in difficulties, sufficient money will be available for all legitimate Agricultural Bank purposes; that the assistance to which settlers are entitled, the assistance promised them when they went on their holdings, will be forthcoming.

The Minister for Lands: In excess of £2,000 per holding?

Mr. MILLINGTON: No; just the ordinary assistance the settlers need to tide them over these hard times. I do not know that it will be possible to stand hard and fast to limits.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The Industries Assistance Act is intended to meet such cases.

Mr. MILLINGTON: There were good reasons for passing the Industries Assistance Act at the time, but for normal periods the policy of the Industries Assistance Board is bad, whereas the policy of the Agricultural Bank is good and sound. I advocate that the Agricultural Bank policy be adhered to. I do not think it fair to throw on the Agricultural Bank trustees the responsibility of altering their policy, and adopting the Industries Assistance Board policy for this scheme. It will be seen whether, in spite of assurances and protestations, I am right or not. Under the scheme set out by the Minister, the Nornalup district cannot be developed by means of

an Agricultural Bank policy. Once the Agricultural Bank get away from that policy, it will be disastrous to the country. Sometimes it seems to me that the Agricultural Bank is the one institution that is sound in Western Australia to-day. Let us maintain its stability. I believe it will be maintained so long as the trustees are not involved in a scheme such as is here proposed. There is no reason why they should be involved in that scheme, as they will have no difficulty whatever in laying out to good advantage all the money at their disposal this year, and all that will come back this year by way of interest. As to the rest of the land settlement policy, I can quite understand that the Lands Department will not be very active for the present. Our concern is with the people already on the land. Their bulwark is the Agricultural Bank. As in the past, in association with other banks and commercial institutions the Agricultural Bank may carry the settlers through. This is not a time for experiment, but a time for co-operation between the Government, the Agricultural Bank, and all other institutions that have been carrying the farmers.

Mr. Angelo: It is not a time to take on new business, no matter how good it may be. That is the point.

Mr. MILLINGTON: I honestly believe that we shall do well to maintain those to whom we are committed and with whom we are involved. Therefore I hope the Government will accept the advice to move slowly, to reconsider the scheme—

The Minister for Lands: And bring the men back here to join the unemployed?

Mr. MILLINGTON: The Government will have to be pretty careful or there will be many unemployed men off the farms. Let it not be said that because we counsel further examination of the scheme we have no confidence in the South-West. The South-West is a most glorious country, and highly suitable for closer settlement. I believe it will be developed when we place a little more responsibility on the settler, and a little less upon the Government. When we talk about what the South-West has produced under group settlement and of all the butter that has been turned out, it would be very interesting to get a calculation as to the cost of that butter. I think it would be found that a good deal of the butter had cost as much as 10s. per lb. Of course, it is going to come out all right when the country is developed, but I do not know that that is

any justification for the disastrous scheme to which this State is committed. We can pay too dearly for rapid development, and I hope that with a full sense of responsibility in those to whom the Agricultural Bank is committed, the Government will go slow in this scheme, particularly in view of our disastrous experience in the past, when we have attempted, very often with unsuitable settlers and an unsuitable scheme, to rapidly develop the most difficult part of our State.

**MR. GRIFFITHS** (Avon) [9.46]: I should have liked to hear something from the Minister regarding what is being done in the district around about Lake Brown, Hampshire and Goomarin where, we were informed, Dr. Teakle was to be sent to inquire into the percentage of salt in the land. I heard to-day that one of the settlers who has been starved off one of those holdings in dire distress is coming down here with his wife and bringing a letter to the member for the electorate. Men up there have been put on to land that has turned out to be impossible for wheat growing, and they are now drifting down here to join the unemployed. I should like to hear from the Minister what is being done for those men. We were told that Dr. Teakle or some other expert was to go up there to make a soil examination, but so far as I have heard nothing has been done. It is now rumoured that this expert is not going up there and that the bank trustees are going to make an inspection themselves. If they go up at this time of the year they will find the country looking pretty good, and if they view the crops on a lot of the salt pans they will consider them very satisfactory. Yet after a week or two of warm weather it will be seen that if those crops go as much as a bag or a bag and a half to the acre, it will be just as much as they can do. I do not wish to speak at any length for I have already spoken on the general debate, but I should like to remind members and Ministers that some meetings have been held recently to deal with the immediate future of the wheat industry. Whilst we know that something is being done in regard to the coming harvest, it is the future of the industry that is worrying most of us who think very much about the matter. I urge the Government that when certain proposals regarding the whole of the ramifications of the industry are brought before them with the idea of trying to make wheat growing and wool

growing less of a gamble and more of a business proposition—I trust that the Government will receive with a favourable ear the requisitions placed before them. I should like the Minister to tell us something of what it is proposed to do with those salt pans which have been found to be a bad proposition for the settlers that are there, many of whom are working what have come to be regarded as hopeless propositions.

**MR. PIESSE** (Katanning) [9.50]: It was pleasing to hear from the Minister that part of the Government's policy was to give closer attention to the land in the vicinity of Albany. I have already had the privilege of addressing the House and drawing the attention of the Government to the fact that in the past very little attention has been given to that portion of the State, and more particularly to the south-eastern portion and almost exclusively to those lands forming the hinterland to the port of Albany. It was very satisfactory and encouraging to the settlers and others interested in that district to know that the Minister has already taken a keen interest in the possibilities of bringing that land, a very large portion of which is suitable for closer settlement, under occupation. In the past the lands close to the port of Albany have been very difficult to deal with, and I think the Government are very wise in going slowly in introducing a policy of experimental settlement. I understand from the Minister he is limiting for the present that settlement to something like 25 individual holdings, and that the Government before embarking upon a very wide scheme of such a nature will await developments. I can only hope that policy will be applied to the Nornalup settlement of which the Minister speaks so highly. I have no personal knowledge of that part of the State, but I know reliable settlers who have a very close knowledge of the district, and for some considerable time past I have been receiving letters from one old settler in that locality who is very dubious about the wisdom of the Government in attacking this scheme. Perhaps he is not fully possessed of the facts. After what the Minister has told us as to his intention to limit the settlement in the Nornalup district to about 25 holdings, in view of the unsatisfactory results from a large portion of the group settlements I think it behoves the Government to go carefully in embarking

upon this scheme. My own opinion, backed up by that of others who have an intimate knowledge of the south-eastern portion of the Great Southern district, is that a very much better and more reliable scheme would be involved in the development of the Frankland-Gordon River districts. The Minister has been good enough to promise to pay a visit to that district within the next few days, and I am hopeful that when he and his officers have made a personal inspection of those lands, a very large area of which will be served by the Boyup Brook-Cranbrook railway when it is carried out in accordance with the now long-standing Parliamentary authorisation, he will be duly impressed. There is in that district a very large area of land occupied by settlers who have long experience of the district. Those settlers have intimated to the Government that they are prepared to surrender portion—in some instances a large portion—of their holdings which, under present conditions, they find it unprofitable to work. I hope that when the Minister has made these visits he will be convinced that he has a very much wider chance of success in that district than he has in going on with the further development of the Nornalup district. And for this reason: The country I speak of is not so heavily timbered. Much of it has been ringbarked and to some extent has been sweetened, and it can easily be brought under cultivation. Every commodity that can be grown in the Nornalup district can be grown in this other district to which I refer. We are sending out of the State annually some £2,000,000 for dairy products. I cannot altogether follow the member for South Fremantle when he says he thinks the Government should not go on with any further land settlement but should devote the whole of their attention to the people already settled on the land. I do not think it would be wise for the Government to cease land settlement altogether. We know that one of the best opportunities the State has to-day is to overcome our shortage in dairy produce amounting to nearly two millions per annum. It would be very wise for the Government to concentrate upon that, and I understand they intend to do so. There is better opportunity for settling a great number of people in the districts I speak of than anywhere else in the State, and in doing this we would

be tackling a profitable production. We are faced with low prices for wheat and wool, and therefore our settlers have a greater opportunity to achieve success in devoting their attention to the growing of butter, cheese, fruit, lambs and potatoes. All these products can be grown in the district to which I am alluding, for it has proved to be one of the most successful districts for the growing particularly of fruit, butter, lambs and potatoes. I cannot agree with those hon. members who say the Government should practically cease all active land settlement. We have a splendid local market to overtake and there is every reason to believe we could produce the whole of our shortage of dairy products within the next three or four years. I think the Minister is wise in making some experiments in those localities. I can only hope that when the Minister has been down there he will be able to put before Parliament a scheme under which he will make an offer to the people in that district to repossess certain portions of their holdings. There is one other matter and that is the question of devoting more attention to settling those lands close to existing railways. The Minister would be well advised if he instructed his officers to make a classification of all such lands capable of being further developed.

Mr. Angelo: He says the Government have not the money with which to buy them.

Mr. PIESSE: At the same time the information would be very valuable to the department and to the House.

Mr. Angelo: What is the use of the information if we can't buy the land?

Mr. PIESSE: There is a good deal of light land on the eastern side of the Great Southern railway that could profitably be brought under cultivation, and I am satisfied that the Government would be wise in giving every assistance to settlers in that neighbourhood to take up those light areas that have been idle for so long and bring them under cultivation. The member for South Fremantle (Mr. McCallum) thought it would be more advisable for the Government to settle some of the abandoned group farms than to embark upon the venture at Nornalup. I do not see much hope of putting settlers on abandoned blocks when it is impossible to get any further assistance from the Agricultural Bank with which to develop them.

Mr. Munsie: He meant those not taken up and that are still idle, not the abandoned blocks.

Mr. PIESSE: The Agricultural Bank trustees are not prepared to grant any assistance to those holdings that have been abandoned and have been re-selected.

Mr. Munsie: Certainly not.

Mr. PIESSE: It would be quite impossible for people to go on the land without funds, or assistance from the bank. I congratulate the Minister on the enterprise he has shown and on his desire to introduce new ideas. We have no wish to stagnate; we must go on and absorb the unemployed, and we can only do that by embarking upon a safe land-settlement policy.

**MR. BROWN** (Pingelly) [10.5]: Like the previous speakers, I recommend the Government to go very slowly on the Nornalup settlement proposal. We have had considerable experience of settlement in the South-West, and we are in a position to know the excessive cost of clearing land and getting it to a self-supporting state. I admit I do not know too much about that part of the State, but from all accounts it is heavily timbered. I have heard it said that it costs £12 an acre to clear the small stuff, but the Minister for Lands has told us that it will cost about £6 10s. If that is the case, the part that it is intended to settle is not very heavily timbered country. From my experience, the better land is always to be found in the heavily timbered areas. Therefore, the land that can be cleared for £6 10s. an acre cannot possibly be the very best. We know from experience of the groups that it will take a considerable time for the land in that part of the State to become self-supporting. The Minister told us that each block will cost £850. I am positive that the farms will not be self-supporting with an expenditure of only £850, for the simple reason that, amongst other things, we have to provide the settlers with a residence. I commend the Government for one thing, and it is that the object of the scheme is to provide relief for unemployed married men, but at the same time we must realise that a considerable number of those men that are being selected have had no practical experience in farming, and particularly in intense cultivation. My

own sense tells me that a considerable number of those men will be failures, and the loss will be considerable. That is one reason why I should like to see the Government go slowly and make a start with, perhaps, 25 settlers. We well know the financial position of the State and the difficult times we are passing through. Where will the Government get the money for this scheme? In connection with the group settlements the Government got money at 1 per cent. for the first five years, and for a little more for the second five years. In the present instance the Government would have to borrow money at whatever rate is asked. It is impossible to raise money at the present time under 6 per cent., and the Government will be lucky if they get it at that figure. Then, if there are failures, we can imagine what the loss will be to the country. Take what it is intended to produce. At Nornalup there will be intense culture, with dairying as the objective. Even now I notice that the price of butter is gradually falling. Under the Paterson scheme a great impetus was given to the butter industry, and the people of Western Australia—more particularly those on the groups—have been reaping the benefit of that scheme. However, the time is fast approaching when we shall be producing more butter than the State can consume, and those engaged in dairying will have to export their surplus. When that time arrives there will be only one country to which to export, and that is England. We know that the price of butter there has fallen as low as 118s. a cwt., whereas at the present time the people of Western Australia are paying 1s. 8d. per lb. That is because there is a local demand. As soon as we overtake it we shall have to export our surplus, and our butter producers will be on the same footing as those in the Eastern States who are exporting. My principal objection to settlement in the South-West is that it will take a long time for the blocks to become self-supporting, whereas it is possible in virgin country to produce wheat in two or three years. The price of wheat will not always remain at 2s. 5d. a bushel. We know that supply and demand regulate the prices of everything. The reason why we are only getting 2s. 5d. a bushel to-day is because there is an over-supply in the world, and it is quite possible that history will repeat

itself, and that there will be droughts and failures in certain producing countries, with the result that the supply will not equal the demand, and there will be competition for our wheat and prices will advance. I have more faith in quick returns from cereal growing than in the dairying industry, although I admit that in connection with dairying the producers get returns every week, whereas with wheat and wool the returns come in only once a year.

Mr. J. H. Smith: And with apples?

Mr. BROWN: There may be a demand for apples, but the best market, which was Germany, is now closed. Germany is retaliating on account of our tariff. We are not able to export our goods to some of those countries now. We have only England to depend upon, and it is hoped that some good will result from the conference taking place in London at the present time.

Mr. Griffiths: It does not look very hopeful at present.

Mr. BROWN: We well know that England has been the dumping ground for the surplus produce of the world. If preference could be given to produce grown in the Dominions, it would be a great help to them.

Mr. Angelo: We will have to send you Home to help us.

Mr. BROWN: I wish I were there. There is no getting away from the fact that we are passing through strenuous and critical times, and we must proceed cautiously. We are not in a position to embark on experiments. We well know now that certain portions of the groups are flourishing. I understand that some are getting large returns per month, but we cannot get away from the fact that Western Australia has lost over five millions through the groups already in existence, and we cannot afford to lose more.

Mr. J. H. Smith: The land is still there.

Mr. BROWN: I know the land is still there, but the fact remains that our five millions is not there; that has gone; and although we have wiped it off so far as a lot of the settlers are concerned, the State is still responsible for it. For that reason alone I advise the Government to go slowly indeed in respect of any further settlement proposals in densely timbered country. We are aware what most of our farmers are going through at the present time. Every where meetings are being called, and when-

ever we pick up a newspaper we find that a conference has been held here or there. The farmers are in financial difficulties and are appealing to the Government for assistance. The Government have no money and owing to the existence of the Federal Loan Council the Government have to borrow every penny they desire through that body. We know they have not had one shilling up to the present. I understand it is the intention of the Government to introduce a Bill to empower the Agricultural Bank to go on the money market.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member cannot anticipate legislation during the discussion on the Vote.

Mr. BROWN: Then I will confine my remarks to the Vote. At the same time, I think I was justified in asking how the Government intended to get the money.

The Minister for Lands: You will know when the Loan Estimates are introduced.

Mr. BROWN: Naturally hon. members will want to know how this work will be financed. The Minister for Lands has not told us.

Member: They ought to get a printing machine and turn out notes.

Mr. BROWN: It is a pity we cannot get some more notes at the present juncture. What are the Government going to do for the men who are on the land at present? In my opinion, the first thing the Government should do is to extend consideration and help to the men already on the land, who have been struggling under adverse conditions in an endeavour to build up an asset for the State. I am certain that between 50 and 60 per cent. of those at present on the land will not be able to meet their obligations this year. If they are pressed, the Government must come to their assistance. I rejoice to know that we still have virgin country in this State. In fact, I believe Western Australia is the only State in the Commonwealth that has any virgin country left in an assured rainfall area. It is a pity that practical men cannot take up land and work it until they place themselves on a sound footing. Under the system we have in this State, as soon as a man secures a block he goes headlong into debt. We place men on the land without any capital whatever, and then we tide those men over financially, as it is proposed in connection with the Nornalup scheme. The settlers there

will be spoon-fed immediately they go on the land. Many of the old pioneers in the Eastern States received no assistance when they went on the land. They had to work their way, with the result that when a bad season came along, they were in a position to weather it. Of course we must admire the system followed in this State under which Governments have assisted people to become farmers, but the fact remains that under that system the moment a man has secured a block, he has found himself hundreds of pounds in debt. In my opinion, Governments in this State have been too lenient altogether. They have advanced money to settlers and have not received work in return. What will be the result? The would-be settlers have to do the work by contract, but if they have had no practical experience in the clearing of land, they will not be able to make tucker or wages out of the contract price. If that is so, then the Government will still have to come to their assistance to keep them on the land. I commend the Government for their endeavours to do something for the unemployed married men, but at the same time I would urge the Government to go slowly and let the men and the land prove themselves before embarking in much expenditure. If that is done at Nornalup, the land will still be there and we will be able to absorb the unemployed married man when we know exactly what can be done. If we were to put 100 men on to blocks there, I have not the slightest doubt that there would be a considerable number of failures through want of experience. I hope the Government will treat the Nornalup scheme more as an experiment because there is still virgin country adjacent to our railways that awaits utilisation. Those areas are within a short distance of Perth and lie between Brookton and Armadale. They will carry a good many settlers yet with a market adjacent. I again urge the Government to go slowly regarding the Nornalup scheme.

**MR. McLARTY** (Murray-Wellington) [10.21]: As the representative of a South-West constituency, I was glad to hear the Minister and members generally express such faith in that part of the State. It seems to me that there is one point upon which we all appear to agree, and that is that the South-West has a bright future.

**Mr. Willcock**: That applies to all the State. The South-West is not the only spot that is any good.

**Mr. McLARTY**: I was referring to the South-West, about which we have been talking all the evening. I was disappointed to note the Minister's attitude regarding the unused land adjacent to existing railways and within a few hours of the city. I do not wish to offer any hostile criticism regarding the Nornalup scheme. I have not seen the country there, but I have come into contact with practical men who are familiar with that area. I was gratified to hear the Minister say that some of the best country he has seen in the State was at Nornalup, and that it was part of the area it was proposed to settle. I was agreeably surprised to hear him say that the land there would be brought into a state of production for £10 per acre.

**Mr. McCallum**: He is optimistic.

**Mr. McLARTY**: I am rather afraid the Minister is optimistic. Although I have not seen the land, I have discussed the position with thoroughly practical men who assure me that the Minister is optimistic.

**The Minister for Lands**: I did not say it could be brought into production for £10 an acre. I was referring to the 25 acres.

**Hon. W. D. Johnson**: What is the good of clearing that if you do not bring it into production?

**Mr. McCallum**: Your £800 included stock and house.

**The Minister for Lands**: Yes, some stock.

**The CHAIRMAN**: Order! The member for Murray-Wellington has the floor.

**Mr. McLARTY**: Apparently it is rather difficult to know what it will cost to bring the land into a state of productivity. There is to be found, within an hour or two of the city, land adjacent to railways, close to main roads, and with a plentiful supply of water, which could be brought into production for very much less than the amount of the Minister's estimate for the Nornalup country.

**Mr. Angelo**: Would the owners of that land want cash?

**Mr. McLARTY**: It might be possible to come to an agreement with some of the owners at least, whereby the matter of cash would not be of urgency. In the State generally, apart from hon. members who have spoken to-night, there is a demand that these lands should be brought into use. That demand is becoming so insistent that I believe the Government will be forced to act in the



near future. Some of the lands to which I refer are among the best in the South-West. The lands are ideal for mixed farming. All agree upon that. They are situated comparatively close to the city. While they are held in their present condition and no effort is made to bring them to productivity, that part of the country in which they are located cannot make real progress. Another point to be taken into consideration is that if a man left his block very soon others would be found willing to take it up. That is a great factor. Men think seriously before going hundreds of miles from the chief markets. These lands, I repeat, are only a couple of hours away from the metropolitan area, are already served by railways and main roads, and have abundance of water. They also have schools; in fact, they have everything that civilisation needs. Therefore I appeal to the Minister to give the matter his most serious consideration.

The Minister for Lands: Will you give us the names of the people who will take the lands from us without our having to find the whole of the money?

Mr. McLARTY: I shall be glad to render the Minister every possible assistance. I feel certain the hon. gentleman will have to act in this direction before long, because the demand that good land adjacent to the city should be utilised has become so insistent. At this late hour I do not wish to speak at length, but I wish to touch on a subject referred to by the member for South Fremantle—group settlement. I shall not dwell on that subject now, but I would point out to the Minister that many men are going on condemned group blocks. Now that these blocks have been written down to something like their true value—reduced from, say, £2,500 to £300—the Government would be justified in extending a little help to the men who have taken the blocks over. If they are not given further assistance, they will walk off. My particular object in speaking is to draw the Minister's attention to the fact that good country exists close to our main markets, country which should be utilised.

**MR. J. H. SMITH** (Nelson) [10.30]: I feel it incumbent upon me to say a few words regarding the Nornalup scheme, Nornalup being part and parcel of my electorate. I am pleased to learn that the Minister has gone carefully into all the details of the scheme, and that it has the backing of

the Agricultural Bank. Further, I am pleased to note that the Minister is cutting up Crown lands for the purpose of creating employment. In settling the Nornalup country the Minister is satisfied that he is settling good country. I for one appreciate his action in laying his cards upon the table and telling the Committee that this land is to be brought into productivity at a cost of £800 per settler.

Mr. Willcock: The Minister denies having said it.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The hon. gentleman says that roads will cost £90 per mile, and that in the first instance transport will be by river. I hope he will be successful. He will have my keen support, seeing that a few years ago a railway was built from Denmark to Frankland River. The Minister tells us that to-day the railway is not earning axle grease. Therefore it behoves the Government to see that some produce is obtained, by way of justifying the construction of that railway.

Mr. Raphael: Are any of the railways paying, anywhere?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Some of them are, I believe. Unfortunately there are no returns showing which lines or sections pay or do not pay. I hope the other side will not unduly criticise the Government for settling the Nornalup area. Their proper time for criticism was when that railway was being built by the previous Government.

Mr. Corboy: You were the only one who knew.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: It is the duty of Parliament to see that produce is available for carriage over the railways. The port of Albany is looking to its back country for trade, and trade will come to it from the Nornalup area, according to the Minister, the experts of the Agricultural Department, and the Agricultural Bank specialists. Their opinions I consider sufficient justification for proceeding with the scheme; and I hope the members of the Committee will see their way to stand solidly behind the Government and afford them every assistance. The latter part of the Minister's remarks dealt with group settlement, a subject I shall not discuss at length to-night. I have often spoken of the value of group settlement. I cannot agree with the member for Pingelly (Mr. Brown) when he says this State has lost five millions of money in group settlement.

I am afraid the hon. member was not speaking by his book. The asset is there, and will gradually develop. The Minister referred to an area at Hester where a group was established by a former Minister for Lands, the present Agent-General (Hon. W. C. Angwin). Members will remember the indignation of Mr. Angwin on that occasion, when the Conservator of Forests sent an army in there to ring-bark that country for reforestation purposes, and Mr. Angwin could not get it for group settlement. I said it was one of the bright spots of group settlement in the South-West. The Minister for Lands has been down in that area and he endorses every word I said. Around the Hester group there are hundreds of areas between Donnybrook and Manjimup equal to anything on the Catterick group, but there is no co-ordination between the Lands Department and the Forests Department. Only tonight the Minister regretted that there was no available land. When speaking on the Address-in-reply, I said that from Pinjarra south at least 500 farms could be established along existing railways, with roads and schools and other facilities already provided. So while I am endorsing the Minister's remarks, I do say again that round about Bridgetown and every township along existing railways in the South-West, hundreds of farms could be established. And the Minister for Lands knows, and the officers of the Forests Department know, that there are in my electorate at least 100 applicants looking for land, men who would not require a pennypiece of assistance, men who cannot get land because so much is held for forestry purposes. Even if there were a few trees on a block suitable for farming, why should they not be allowed to remain under forest conditions, while the settler tills the soil? All that is required is the necessary co-operation between the Lands and the Forests Departments. And even if the settlers converted the timber into a marketable product, would it matter very much if the Forests Department did not get the royalty, if the farmer got it instead, so long as it was used in developing the State? I can assure the Minister for Lands that if only he will throw open those areas he will have no need to go farther afield, but will have enough work to do in settling the land along existing railways and roads without having

to provide any assistance whatever for the settlers. They are already in the district, farmers' sons who are only too anxious to go on the land. They have their own stock and implements, and will get every assistance from the old people in the development of their holdings. I am pleased to have from the Minister the assurance that the Nornalup farms are going to be established at £800 apiece. If that can be done, it will be very good work indeed.

Progress reported.

*House adjourned at 10.41 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Wednesday, 15th October, 1930.*

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

### QUESTION—RAILWAY WOOL FREIGHT.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL asked the Minister for Country Water Supplies: Regarding the reduced railway rate on wool granted by the Government as from the 13th inst., will they favourably consider the extension of the concession to those who consigned new season's wool prior to that date?

The MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES replied: No. It is not the custom to make retrospective variations of rates whether they be upward or downward.

### LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. E. H. Harris, leave of absence for six consecutive sittings granted to Hon. C. B. Williams (South) on the ground of urgent private business.