

already has been used in unfair competition with whole milk.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: The price of butter fat varies, but the price of milk under the board will remain fairly constant. If the price of butter fat improves to about 1s. per lb., it will cost more for milk for concentrating than for whole milk for consumers.

Amendment on amendment put and negatived.

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

Bill again reported with a further amendment.

*House adjourned at 8.48 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

*Tuesday, 7th November, 1933.*

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

### QUESTION—MIDLAND RAILWAY COMPANY.

Mr. MARSHALL (without notice) asked the Minister for Railways: Is the agreement with the Midland Railway Company, permitting them to haul merchandise at a flat rate of £2 10s. per ton from Fremantle to Geraldton, still in existence?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: So far as I know, the agreement is still in existence.

### QUESTION—TRAMWAYS, DELAYS IN SERVICE.

Mr. CROSS asked the Minister for Railways: Is the Minister aware that there was delay in the Hay-street tramway service on Wednesday, 1st November, and if so, what the cause was?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1. Yes, owing to traffic exigencies it was necessary to cancel the 7.54 p.m. tram, but cars left the Town Hall at 7.49, 7.59, and 8.11 p.m. 2. Answered by No. 1.

### BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1. Public Works Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Railways (for the Minister for Works).

2. Government Railways Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Railways.

### BILL — GERALDTON SAILORS AND SOLDIERS' MEMORIAL INSTITUTE LANDS VESTING.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

### BILL—AUGUSTA ALLOTMENTS.

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 31st October.

MR. LATHAM (York) [4.38]: From time to time there is sure to be some difficulty in tracing the owners of land so far as this affects the old titles. A little while ago a Bill was put through vesting in the Crown certain lands in the mining areas. This measure follows on somewhat similar lines. The areas with which this disability was associated are not only found at Augusta but at other places as well. In Albany, for instance, there is land similar to this area, the title for which the Minister is now seeking to provide for the present occupiers. It might be a good plan if the Titles Office were to provide machinery by which the necessary adjustments could be made. At present it is impossible for the Commissioner of Titles or the Minister for Lands to make any adjustments without

bringing down special legislation. About 100 years ago land around Augusta was given to certain people on condition that they effected certain improvements to it. After they had held it for a little while, they were advised by the authorities controlling State affairs at the time to leave the district on account of the difficulty of making contact with the seat of government. In all probability they had not at the time fulfilled the conditions required of them, and the Crown grant was never available to them. They left Augusta and went to Busselton. The file does not show whether they were given other land in place of that from which they were removed at Augusta. At that time Crown land had probably very little value. There is no doubt therefore, they were given compensation in some form or other. When Augusta became settled again, the original occupiers, or the next of kin, recorded a claim against the land. This has gone on for a number of years. Different people have applied to the Crown for titles. In view of the disabilities that existed, the Lands Department were unable to give titles and the Minister has now brought down this Bill to rectify the position. The measure now before us differs entirely from that recently passed, seeing that in the latter case private lands on the goldfields were being dealt with and the whole of the land was reverting to the Crown. In the case under review it is a question of giving the occupiers a title in fee simple. I do not know whether that is a wise thing to do. The Bill as drafted would enable anyone, who had put his foot on the land prior to the passing of the Bill, to lay a claim to the title, because the measure sets out that the person in possession of the land at the passing of the Act may demand a title at the hands of the Minister. It is optional for the Minister to give such title or to withhold it. The Minister in this case is some officer of the Lands Department. I do not think it would be wise to give any officer that right. People who have been on the Augusta land for a number of years, and have either paid the rates and taxes or assumed liability for them, may be entitled to consideration, but people who have been there more recently should pay the Crown at least the unimproved value of the land. It is only fair to ask them to do that unless they can show that they have some claim to the land through their ancestors, or

through some persons who may be able to prove that they are next of kin to the original occupiers. I am anxious that we should clean up the disabilities associated with the early land-owners, but I think we ought to be a little more careful than apparently we are likely to be if the Bill is passed as printed. Persons who are claiming the fee simple should show that they have some right to the land, and that this right extends over a number of years. I hope the Minister will agree with me in that respect. They should have held the land for at least five years, and be able to prove they have been in possession of it and made their home upon it for that period. Local road boards have from time to time sold some of this land to recover the amount of the rates due. In cases where sales have been effected, the Commissioner of Titles has been unable to give the purchaser a title to the land. I do not know whether it is proposed to compensate the purchaser by returning the money he has paid, or to take no notice of the claim.

The Minister for Lands: The purchaser has to prove his title.

Mr. LATHAM: But the department cannot issue a title.

The Minister for Lands: He would be in occupation of the land.

Mr. LATHAM: He may not be in occupation.

The Minister for Lands: His agent might be in occupation.

Mr. LATHAM: I know of one man who bought four blocks of this land at auction. I do not know what it is proposed to do with it. I hope the Minister will not give anyone, who has merely walked into possession of the land pending the passing of legislation, a title to the blocks. People ought to be able to prove that they have held the land for at least five years. Some amendment will be necessary to the Bill unless the Minister will give the House an assurance that he will instruct the officers to give a title to a man only if he can prove he has been in possession of the land for five years or longer.

The Minister for Justice: The Transfer of Land Act provides for a term of 12 years.

Mr. LATHAM: In some cases men have been in occupation for many years and have made the land their home. If the people concerned are charged the unimproved value of the land, it will amount to only a small sum. I have no objection to the Bill pro-

vided people can show that they have a claim to the land. It is a bad principle, however, to allow someone to get possession of Crown land and then make an application for a title in fee simple. This provision might give encouragement to the class of individual known as a land jobber or squatter. I use the latter term in the sense that he "squats" on the land to gain advantage from a position that could arise under the Bill. For at least 20 years past, attempts have been made to secure titles for some of the blocks. I do not intend to do anything but facilitate the passage of this legislation, but I think some restriction should be imposed regarding the necessary period a person must be in occupation.

**MR. McDONALD** (West Perth) [4.46]: I think the term I have usually heard applied to the persons who take advantage of loopholes in legislation of this type is "jumper." I understand that quite a lot of land in the Augusta area has been "jumped." I have been to the district, and while there, heard references to the position with regard to some of the allotments. Some people there have been in possession of their blocks for a considerable time, and a Bill, such as the one introduced by the Government, under which the position can be cleared up, is entirely desirable. There are one or two features to which I desire to refer. In the first place, the Bill provides that a Crown grant may be made only where the land is occupied, or was occupied at the time of the commencement of the legislation. Clause 3 sets out that where land is occupied, the person who is occupying it may make application to be granted a title in fee simple. The Bill also provides that, although the land is occupied and the occupier has made application for a title in fee simple, the Minister, instead of granting the title to the occupier, may grant it to another claimant, should the latter establish a better right to the possession of the land. That means that should the occupier apply for the title and someone else enter an appearance and show that he is next of kin to the original owner or is a descendant of the original owner, or possesses some better form of title to the ownership of the block than can be advanced by the occupier, the Minister may prefer the claim of the man who is not in occupation of the land. I do not know if that is what the Minister intended. Whether the power to grant the fee simple is to be

restricted only to those instances in which the land is occupied at the time this legislation becomes operative, I do not know, but that is how the measure appears to read in its present form. Only where a person is occupying the land will the Minister be empowered to grant a title in fee simple.

The Minister for Justice: He will be able to grant the title on application.

**MR. McDONALD**: There may be instances in which the land is not occupied at present by a person who possesses a claim to the allotment which, if the Minister were aware of the fact, would justify the title in fee simple being granted to him. The claim by such a person may be by descent from the original owners, and yet he may not be in occupation of the land at all. Then again, there may be a person who bought an allotment six months ago from someone who ostensibly held a right to the land, and has not yet come into occupation.

The Minister for Lands: But the individual would not pay his money until he got the title to the land.

**MR. McDONALD**: I appreciate that point, but what I want to make clear to the Minister is that a person may have a claim on the land without actually being in occupation. I submit that there are two classes of persons the Minister desires to protect. One is the occupier and the other is the person who is not in occupation but has a claim to the land by descent or otherwise. It seems to me that unless there is someone in occupation of the land referred to in the Bill, people will have no right to benefit from the legislation. That is my interpretation of the provision. The land must be occupied by someone before any Crown grant can be issued by the Minister. It may be possible to amend the Bill so as to provide for the position of persons who may have a claim to the land but are not in occupation of it at the time of the passing of the legislation. The other point I wish to refer to has been touched on by the Leader of the Opposition. Perhaps rightly, no principle is laid down in the Bill to guide the Minister as to the circumstances that will justify the granting of titles in respect of allotments covered by the Bill. The Minister, presumably, will exercise his discretion and will probably declare that a person will have to be in occupation of his block for a certain period of years before his claim to a title will be recognised. He may also determine that if

an applicant is a descendant of the original buyer, he may receive consideration under this legislation. I am prepared to believe it is undesirable to lay down any definite principle in the measure, and the Minister may perhaps intend the House to understand that before he grants a title to any allotment, he will have to be satisfied that the claim lodged is valid, or that the land has been occupied for such a prolonged period as to make it appear equitable that the occupier should receive a Crown grant. At a later stage, I propose to draw attention to the circumstances under which allotments that are not granted to any applicant, shall revert to the Crown. There are various alternatives mentioned governing the reversion of such land to the Crown, and it appears to me that some of the alternatives outlined are such that the circumstances disclosed would indicate the land should not revert to the Crown. I propose to submit an amendment that will deal with that phase.

**MR. BROCKMAN** (Sussex) [4.53]: I support the second reading of the Bill because I know the position regarding the blocks at Augusta. They have been occupied for a long time. There are only a few of them and the persons in occupation should receive their titles in fee simple. The other blocks are supposed to be owned by different people, but no one seems to know who those people are. The local governing authorities cannot place the properties in their rate books because the owners cannot be discovered. It is wrong that at a centre like Augusta, which is coming into favour as a pleasure and seaside resort, blocks should be held up and their alienation prohibited. An Act of Parliament is required to enable the occupiers to secure their title deeds. Regarding those who are "squatting" on blocks, it should be necessary for people in that category to establish their claim to the allotments by proving an occupancy extending over five or ten years. Most of the blocks have been occupied for many years. I am anxious that the title to all the blocks available in the Augusta district shall be cleared so that the public will have an opportunity to purchase them. There are many people who are in the habit of visiting Augusta during the holiday periods, and that centre is likely to become one of the finest health resorts in the South-West.

**MR. J. H. SMITH** (Nelson) [4.55]: I am in accord with the Minister in his desire to be empowered to grant titles for blocks at Augusta. Some of them were taken up in 1834, or nearly 100 years ago, I join issue with the Leader of the Opposition when he suggests that it should be necessary for the people to prove their occupancy over a period of five years. In my opinion, the Minister should not grant the title to a block unless the applicant has been in occupation of it for at least 20 years. There are but three or four persons who will be affected.

Mr. Latham: I said that not less than five years' occupancy should be required.

**MR. J. H. SMITH:** Many of these holdings have been handed down from generation to generation. There are some very old established families residing in the Augusta district. In 1911 it appeared that Augusta, or more particularly Flinder's Bay, would prove to be an important factor in the development of that part of the State. In that year the State Saw Mills Department established Pemberton No. 1 Mill outside Manjimup. Flinder's Bay was to be the port through which all our karri was to be exported. The bay may develop into an important port in the future because it is a natural harbour. I believe titles should be provided for the blocks, of which there are about 11 that will be affected. I also agree that the Minister will be justified in saying that while those who are in possession of land that has been handed down from generation to generation since 1834, have every claim to receive their titles, those who have "squatted" on their blocks during the last few months should not have an equal right. Departmental officers will probably know that leakages can occur. Someone may hear that a Bill is to be introduced into Parliament to provide titles for those in occupation of the blocks, and he may visit the district and occupy one of the blocks in question. No one knows how the leakages occur, but it is obvious that they do occur.

Mr. Coverley: What is the average area of the blocks?

**MR. J. H. SMITH:** There are about 11 town blocks in Augusta itself. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that provision should be made that the blocks should be occupied for a reasonable time before those in possession become entitled

to the fee simple, and I think the period should be 20 years. The department should submit other blocks for sale, so that the public may have an opportunity to purchase sites at Augusta, which is becoming a very popular seaside resort.

### THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon.

M. F. Troy—Mt. Magnet—in reply) [4.58]: Members who have spoken have taken a very proper view regarding the matters dealt with in the Bill. I shall be prepared to accept any reasonable amendments that may be proposed. I am in agreement with the suggestion of the Leader of the Opposition that some time should be specified regarding the period of occupancy of any block respecting which a title in fee simple is to be granted. If a person should have heard of the intention to introduce this legislation and entered into occupation of a block in anticipation of benefiting, the receipt of title by that person would be contrary to the intentions of Parliament. I will accept any amendment to overcome that difficulty, but I would not agree to making the period 20 years. I should say 12 months would be sufficient.

Hon. N. Keenan: Why not five years?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I think that if a person has been bona fide in occupation for 12 months, that should be sufficient.

Mr. Latham: Will you agree to five years?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Provided it will not put an impost on anyone down there who has been in bona fide occupation for a lesser term.

Mr. Brockman: It would be safe to make it five years.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Well the hon. member, representing the district, knows more about it than I do, but I do not think that a man who has made his home there, should be penalised. However I am not disposed to quarrel with the amendment suggested. Regarding the point raised for the member for West Perth (Mr. McDonald) as to a person having a claim to one of these blocks, notwithstanding that he is not in occupation of the land, I do not object to the hon. member's suggested amendment. The Bill is an attempt to deal reasonably with the position, so if there are persons who can establish claims to any of

these blocks, whether they be occupying the blocks or not, they ought to be considered. The hon. member pointed out that there is a difficulty as to how this matter can be determined. It cannot be provided in the Bill, but must be left to the Minister, whoever he may be. The Minister will require proof in support of the claim of any person; there must be proof that the holder has occupied the land for say, five years. The only doubt is as to the unoccupied land, and I am sure that under the Bill that can be left to the Minister. The Bill has been before quite a number of successive Ministers, but for some reason or another, it has never previously been brought down. Mr. Cecil Clifton, when Under-Secretary for Lands, was very earnest in his desire that the Bill should be made law. Really nothing can be done at Augusta without it. The member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith) was quite right in saying that Augusta is a promising watering place. It has been held back by reason of the fact that no one can get a title to the land.

Mr. Brockman: It is more than a promising watering place; it is a promising seaport.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, I myself have seen vessels sheltering in Flinders Bay in very heavy weather. Still, I was thinking of it as a watering resort. Certainly nothing can be done until the titles are available. As I have said, I will accept some of the amendments that have been suggested.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

### *In Committee.*

Mr. Sleeman in the Chair; the Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Certain persons may apply for grant in fee simple of allotments occupied by them:

Hon. N. KEENAN: The clause reads, "Any person who was at the commencement of this Act and still is occupying and enjoying any allotment of land," etc. It is extraordinary phraseology, for what it really means is, "who is in occupation." Does not the Minister intend to deal with the person actually in occupation?

The Minister for Lands: Yes.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Well, why bother about any person who was in occupation at the commencement of the Act? Does the phrase fall in with the Minister's intention?

The Minister for Lands: Yes, I mean any person who has been occupying the land.

Mr. LATHAM: It will make all the difference if we fail to provide that the person was occupying the land at the commencement of the Act. I move an amendment—

That "at" in line one be struck out, and "for a period of not less than five years before" be inserted in lieu.

It will then read "Any person who was for a period of not less than five years before the commencement of this Act," etc.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. LATHAM: The clause provides that a person who desires to obtain a grant in fee simple shall within three months after the commencement of this Act, make application to the Minister. The next succeeding clause provides that any person who within six months can make a better claim to the land may do so, and on the recommendation of the Minister may be granted the fee simple. It will be necessary therefore, to provide for that delay in making a grant to the original applicant.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, that is so.

Clause, as previously amended, put and passed.

Clause 4—Crown grants may be granted to person occupying certain allotments:

Hon. N. KEENAN: In this clause the Governor is required to carry out specific duties, but the word "may" is used. The object of the Minister is to have complete control, and so I suggest that there be inserted after the word "may" the words "at his discretion."

The Minister for Lands: Does not that mean the same thing.

Hon. N. KEENAN: No. I move an amendment—

That after "may" in line 5 there be inserted "at his absolute discretion."

The Minister for Lands: But the Governor may refuse.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The Minister can only recommend to the Governor, and the Governor can exercise his right accordingly. No one would suggest that the Minister should recommend, and the Governor automatically grant. However, I have just been

looking at the Interpretation Act, and I do not now think the amendment is necessary. I will withdraw it.

The Premier: We will look into it, and if necessary get it rectified in another place.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 5—Persons may establish their rights to an estate in fee simple of allotments occupied by other persons and obtain grants in fee simple:

Mr. McDONALD: I am not sure whether the Minister has some reason for confining the power to granting applications in cases where somebody else is in occupation. I think an amendment enabling a grant to be made in a case where there is no actual occupation of the land would best come in this clause, but I have not drafted out such an amendment.

The Minister for Lands: We will recommend the Bill for you, and you can move it then.

Mr. McDONALD: Thank you.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 6, 7, Schedules, Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

## BILL—FORESTS ACT AMENDMENT.

### *Second Reading.*

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [5.17] in moving the second reading said: Section 41 of the Forests Act, 1918, provided that three-fifths of the net revenue of the Forests Department should go to a reforestation fund. In 1924 the revenue from sandalwood was excluded and paid into Consolidated Revenue. When the Act was passed in 1918 only a very small amount of revenue was received from sandalwood, and so it was not thought necessary to exclude any of the revenue from sandalwood. In 1924 and in the years that followed, because of an alteration in the royalty charge, the total revenue from sandalwood amounted to a considerable sum. Speaking from memory, it reached £40,000 in one year. It was never contemplated that three-fifths of that royalty should be paid into the reforestation fund. In 1924 a Bill was introduced to exclude the revenue from sandalwood from payment to the reforestation

fund, but as it finally passed both Houses and became law, the proposal was adopted with the exception that £5,000 of the revenue from sandalwood was to be paid into the fund for sandalwood reforestation. That was continued each year until 1930, when it was considered undesirable to continue payment of the amount because the money was not required. Consequently, the provision for the payment of £5,000 for sandalwood reforestation was dropped and all the revenue from sandalwood has been paid into Consolidated Revenue from 1930 onwards. The year 1930 was the one in which members opposite took office. I had had to find £5,000 each year for sandalwood reforestation, but our friends opposite were released from the obligation when they were in office. It is unnecessary to pay any further money into the sandalwood fund. The balance in the fund at present is £2,827.

Mr. Stubbs: Has the reforestation been successful?

The PREMIER: Experiments have been made but have not been successful. The annual expenditure has been approximately £1,250, but we have been paying into the fund a considerable amount and more than was necessary. Each year since 1924, there has been an unexpended balance as follows:—

	£
1924-25 .. ..	3,353
1925-26 .. ..	5,184
1926-27 .. ..	6,730
1927-28 .. ..	7,127
1928-29 .. ..	9,307
1929-30 .. ..	6,372
1930-31 .. ..	4,962
1931-32 .. ..	4,197
1932-33 .. ..	2,827

It is not necessary that any of the revenue from sandalwood should be paid into the reforestation fund and it is desirable that it should be paid into Consolidated Revenue. The Conservator of Forests says that the principal reason for the discontinuance of sandalwood regeneration was the depredations of rabbits, which have come in as a new factor, and which cannot be economically controlled on uncleared land on which sandalwood must be sown, as it is a root parasite and the nuts must be sown in proximity to host plants.

Mr. Ferguson: The rabbits will not give it a chance.

The PREMIER: No, and it is impossible to wire-net large areas.

Mr. Latham: The department netted some areas.

The PREMIER: Yes, as an experiment, but no operations on an extensive scale could be carried out.

Mr. Marshall: And no wire-netting would keep out rabbits.

The PREMIER: No.

The Minister for Mines: The rabbit fence prevents a lot of rabbits from going back to South Australia.

The PREMIER: This is a continuance measure to continue the practice of the last three years.

Mr. Latham: This proposed legislation is a little retrospective.

The PREMIER: Because a Continuance Bill was not passed last year. The revenue was so small in 1929 that it would not make any difference, but in 1930 a Bill was passed and made retrospective to the year before. Last year the Government did not pass a continuance Bill; it was either overlooked or omitted. Consequently I am now making the measure cover last year, just as was done by our friends opposite in 1930.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: It is a biennial, not an annual measure.

The PREMIER: It has become biennial. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Latham, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—PURCHASERS' PROTECTION.**

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 2nd November.

**MR. DONEY** (Williams - Narrogin) [5.23]: There is no need to labour the question whether a demand exists on the part of the country for the objects set out in this Bill. I think there has been a very obvious demand. Members will recall that two sessions ago, under cover of a motion sponsored by the then member for Canning, all phases of the rather involved business of land salesmanship were discussed. If I remember rightly, it was shown that the prevailing or almost unanimous opinion of the House was that the law in respect of land sales required strengthening in many respects. The Bill before us practically embodies the recommendations of His Honor

Mr. Justice Dwyer who, on the occasion to which I have referred, was given a commission to inquire into the allegedly irregular methods employed by a certain city firm dealing in subdivided land. In fairness to the firm, it has to be admitted that not all the major allegations made were substantiated, but during the hearing sufficient was disclosed regarding irregular practices of a certain type of land agent to impress the Commissioner deeply with the need for strengthening the law. Generally, this is a very necessary Bill and it is a well-intentioned Bill. It is entirely a non-party measure, but I question whether it has much hope of acceptance unless it be amended in quite a number of directions. There is no doubt in my mind that the Bill, if accepted, will strengthen justice in one or two spots where, in the past, justice has, without the faintest doubt, been outwitted. The land salesman of to-day is a very clever person.

Mr. Marshall: He could make a lot of misrepresentations and not get caught under this measure.

Mr. DONEV: Then it will be the obvious duty of the hon. member at a later stage to suggest the necessary amendments. The present-day land salesman is a person who has received highly specialised training in his own particular line of business. Generally, I understand, he is regarded as not being worthy of his job unless he has the faculty to sell land to a person who does not really want it. When the modern land salesman is moving on top gear as it were, with his approaches and demonstrations all carefully planned, he is well-nigh invulnerable. It stands to reason, therefore, that a soundly constructed Act will be needed to hold him. Perhaps I may be paying the land agent a compliment when I say he seems to be no longer unduly worried, and certainly his actions are in no way circumscribed, by the laws affecting him. He has so thoroughly explored those laws and particularly their weaknesses, that he can, when the occasion demands, jump through them, under them or over them, but certainly during the past year or two he has, by his excesses, over-reached himself and has demonstrated the need for strengthening the law dealing with land sales. Although I am supporting the second reading of the Bill, I feel doubtful whether it will be for the ultimate good of the people to buttress their

moral defences by legislation of this kind. Land selling during recent years in the State has been what one might term a sheltered industry. The Bill will quite plainly denude the land sellers of that shelter and will transfer it to the buyer. I do not know that I can regard that as right. It certainly is not right to adopt a method which, in other circumstances, we would condemn. There is another aspect of the matter. If the purchasers fail, the law can be depended upon to make good their weakness. The knowledge that the law is an efficient back-stop will coax people to enter into contracts with even greater irresponsibility and carelessness than they do now. Manifestly, a normal person ought, in my opinion anyhow, to be held accountable to the greatest degree possible for his own actions and decisions: and it would probably be wise on our part to fix a limit beyond which we should not attempt to intervene between an individual and his obligations. I suppose the obvious rejoinder will be that until such time as we have educated the individual to withstand the wiles of the land agent, we must have regard to the harm and misery that is caused, and protect the individual from himself and from the land salesman by the agency of the law. When Mr. Justice Dwyer was given his commission to inquire into the operations of the company that has been mentioned, I think it was with the object of securing relief to those clients of the company who appeared to have been treated with undue harshness. I desire to remind the Minister—although for that matter he knows it already—that the Bill will not give those individuals any relief whatever. The Bill leaves them uninfluenced and untouched. Nevertheless, we recognise it was the sufferings of those people which gave rise to the Bill; and yet, unfortunately, they will be left entirely outside the scope of the protection that is now to be provided. I know it is dangerous, highly dangerous sometimes, and generally highly improper, to tamper with existing contracts. I know, too, it will be particularly difficult to secure the impartial retroaction of this Bill, so that the ills of those sufferers may be in part alleviated. I would ask the Minister, even so, whether despite the difficulty, retroaction is absolutely impossible, and whether he has given to this aspect of the question the thorough investigation which its importance merits. From what the Minister said when moving the second



reading of the Bill, I know he has given it some consideration, but I am wondering whether he has given it all the attention that it undoubtedly deserves. I have the same regard as have other members for the sanctity of contracts, but I would like to qualify that statement by saying that the only type of contract which I hold to be sacrosanct is the contract which affords an equal measure of fair play to both parties, the signatures to which have been obtained without compulsion and without undue persuasion, and which the parties entered into with both eyes open. I may add, however, that I am not pressing the Minister to do this, because I quite see that every care should be exercised when it is desired by the House to give retrospective application to a Bill of this kind or any kind. We have to be careful that the gate is not opened too far, and more harm than good thereby occasioned. I cannot see the least excuse for introducing the word chattel into the Bill. I do not intend to speak at length upon its inclusion now, as it is my intention, when we reach the Committee stage, to move for its excision, and I now give the Minister notice to that effect. The Bill also makes it incumbent upon a land salesman, in the case of a sale to a married woman, to secure the husband's consent before the contract becomes binding on the wife. Unless that consent be obtained, she may break the contract at any time. I cannot see that that is a sound principle. Certainly, it is not a principle that can be extended generally, although I think there might be an excuse for it in certain circumstances, but those circumstances should certainly be specified. It will be plain to members that there must be many married women possessed of ample means in their own right who probably would not require, nor would they seek, the protection to which I have referred. The clause in the Bill dealing with that particular matter should, I think, be recast. The reference to minors in the same clause does not, in my opinion, carry the same objections. I may inform the Minister that in due course I shall move to amend the short title of the Bill. That is all I have to say now, except to make it plain that the Bill will not only affect those companies in respect of whose malpractices we are bringing down this legislation, but unfortunately quite a number of land agents in this city whose standing is, of course, beyond question.

**MR. NEEDHAM** (Perth) [5.37]: A measure of this nature is necessary, because undoubtedly very much latitude has been given to people dealing with real estate and sales of subdivisinal lands. We had a fair amount of evidence to prove that during the sittings of the Royal Commission appointed by the previous Government a year or two ago to inquire into the sales of certain estates. I agree with the principle of the Bill and shall support the second reading, because I think purchasers of blocks of land should be given protection. They have not had it in the past. They have really been the victims in many cases of designing people who were somewhat unscrupulous in their method of representation of the value of the land about to be sold, and particularly generous in their promises with respect to the public utilities that would sooner or later be connected with the land to be sold. I have had that experience myself, when attempts were made to sell and assurances were freely given that within a very short period the particular block of land I was offered would be an Elysium or an Arcadia, with all the conveniences that a man could require. A measure of this nature is worthy of serious consideration. While I shall support the second reading of the Bill, there are one or two features of it that might be considered when it reaches the Committee stage, and that to my mind are rather drastic. In the first place, if misrepresentations are made on the sale of blocks of land, penalties will be incurred.

Mr. Moloney: That is very essential.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I realise that, but that provision in the Bill rather conveys the idea that every person concerned in the selling of subdivisinal lots is a dishonest person. That is the presumption. While certain persons in the community may not be altogether honest, we must remember that other people are entirely honest. Clause 4 of the Bill, if I do not mistake its import, provides that the onus of proof of innocence is on the person charged. I think that is wrong. It is altogether at variance with the recognised principle of British justice that a person is innocent until he or she is proved guilty. The onus of proof should not lie on the person charged, but upon the prosecutor. Unless I have misinterpreted that clause, I say it is an inversion of British justice. Probably there will be a chance of amending the clause in the Committee stage. Clause 5 should also be given consideration. A

period of 14 days is allowed for inspection: that is to say, if the purchaser has not inspected the block of land at the time the contract is entered into, then 14 days shall be allowed for inspection purposes; and thereafter another period of seven days is allowed to complete negotiations—in all, 21 days. I think that period is rather long, when one realises that most persons engaged in this class of business have at their disposal modern motor transport.

The Minister for Mines: That is provided the contract is signed in the vicinity of the land to be sold.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I admit that. One must, of course, take into consideration the vast distances in this State of ours. As the Minister for Mines has interjected, an intending purchaser of land in the metropolitan area may be residing on the gold-fields. I still think, however, that a person should inspect the land in a shorter period than 14 days. There is another phase: there can be the opportunity to speculate in that period with a view to selling at a profit. That opportunity should not be given. The only other clause that requires to be amended is Clause 7, which deals with contracts made by infants and married women, and which provides that a contract may be repudiated within a period of 12 months. I realise the necessity for protecting married women as well as minors who may be liable to be misled into doing things that should not be done. Still, 12 months is rather a long period, and I venture to suggest that a much shorter term could be provided. The Bill is necessary, and I support the second reading, but in Committee I should like to see made the alterations I have suggested.

MR. MOLONEY (Subiaco) [5.48]: I support the second reading of the Bill, which is an improvement on the legislation at present in existence. I was certainly surprised to hear some of the points raised by the member for Perth, and for the moment I thought that he must have felt that he was sent here directly to represent the vendors. I have before me the report of the Royal Commission on Land and Homes, Limited. If the member for Perth had perused it he would have realised the need for Clause 4 about which he is so fearful. I am not going to worry the House by reading the report of the commission. The Bill, however, is just

what was suggested by the judge who sat as the commissioner. But for my part I do not think it goes far enough, although it is a decided improvement on the law as it stands to-day. The genesis of the Bill, no doubt, is the flagrant injustice done to the people under the aegis of the law, and we have a leading member of the legal fraternity of this State acting as the buttress, and possibly rightly, to protect the vendors who were doing everything that was inequitable, but remaining within the law. Even the magistrates who had to give judgment against the purchasers in many cases pointed out that the position was monstrous. Still, the law was there and it had to be administered. The searchlight was thrown upon the company and the iniquities they had been practising were exposed. It was elicited that they employed 287 salesmen in a short space of time. Those salesmen were unleashed like dogs from a slip; they went from house to house and made it their business to seek out the poor people who no doubt were waiting each week for their little pittance, and those people were inveigled into buying land at a prohibitive price. They were gulled by misrepresentations. It was alleged also that the contracts were falsified after they had been signed. These documents were subjected to microscopical tests, but the Commissioner said that there was a slight doubt about it, and he gave the vendors—Land and Homes Ltd., for whom the member for Perth is so solicitous—the benefit of the doubt. Our job now is to see that justice is done to the purchaser as well as to the vendor. There is no question now that the Bill has been framed largely as a result of the comments of the Commissioner, who cannot in any way be accused of having been partisan. He saw where the anomalies existed and he suggested certain alterations to the law. In my opinion, however, those alterations do not go far enough, because they will apply only to the future. I remember a gathering of 400 people that assembled in Keogh's hall to ventilate the grievances they had against Land and Homes Limited. It made one's heart bleed to listen to some of the tales that were told at that meeting. The outcome was that the people combined and they were able to bring pressure to bear, and prevent the vendors from carrying out the law by way of distraining on whatever goods and chat-

tels the unfortunate purchasers were possessed of. I am glad to see that provision is made in the Bill for this to be eliminated. There is another provision that I should like to see included in the Bill, though I do not know whether another place would allow it to go through. Most of those people who assembled at the hall were committed to payments extending over a period of five or six years for the land that they bought, and a remarkable feature of the contract they entered into, unlike anything in a hire purchase agreement, was that they were compelled to pay although the land they had bought had been taken from them. Even without the land, the purchasers were still responsible for the payments. The Bill should contain a provision to prevent this kind of thing continuing. I should like to show the House what huge profits were made by Land and Homes Ltd., and I will take St. James' Park as an illustration. These were the figures that were given before the Royal Commission. The original purchase price was £13,841 then £221 was paid by way of surveys, £1,235 for road-making, £88 for clearing, £392 for water service, £82 for electric light, and £66 for sundries. The amount set down for houses erected was £2,319, and for allowance interest £6,525. The total amount expended, and this included the purchase price, was £24,819. The company received by way of sales £71,938. Thus they showed a gross profit of £47,119. Their selling extras were £17,202, and they made a net profit of £29,917. I have dealt with only one of about eight estates the company had going practically at the same time. The 287 bloodhounds to whom I have already referred were out roping in the people under various pretexts, and inducing them to buy the land at ten times its real value; there is no question about that. We find now in some instances the people who bought that land are experiencing great hardships. Some women have suffered to the extent of having had to go into hospital on account of worry and stress to which they have been subjected by the vultures who induced them to buy the land, and afterwards took proceedings against them. I can give the names of these people if it is necessary to do so. The poor women are afraid to move: they have the sword of Damocles hanging over their head and there is no relief for them. They have said, "Take

the land; I want to have nothing further to do with it." The company, however, will not do so and, like Shylock, hold the buyers to their bond. That is why this legislation is so essential. I consider that there should be a retrospective clause in the Bill so that people who are still suffering at the hands of these bloodsuckers shall be afforded some relief. As it is drafted at present, the Bill merely provides for the future. That is not sufficient. I can quote instances where the salesmen spoke of tramways to be built, electric light and water supplies to be laid on. The unfortunate buyers were unable to do themselves justice when giving evidence before the commission. As might have been expected of untutored people, they failed through nervousness in the witness box and did not disclose everything they could have done notwithstanding the able services of Mr. Ross McDonald who watched their interests. In fact, very few were able to give a coherent account of what had occurred between themselves and the salesmen. Thus, in a sense, the commission resolved itself into a whitewashing affair since the company kept within the law in whatever they did. What we now require is that the onus shall be thrown on people who have land to sell, of giving proof that their representations are true. Many of the people who bought the land were satisfied with what they were told and affixed their signatures over a dotted line on the contract. That contract, unfortunately, is binding. It is satisfactory to find that provision is made to protect married women and minors from the Smart Alecs who come along and paint a rosy picture of a cottage and garden to gull the unsophisticated who, they say, can end their days in peace and comfort. They got out a catalogue for a place that was to cost about £10,000. It is there pictured as a future home at St. James' Park or the Bella Vista Heights. This is the sort of thing they put over the public, and the sort of thing for which people fall. Strange to say, so-called shrewd business men have also fallen for it. This company represents one of the cleverest crowd that have ever invaded this State. They are still operating here. They avail themselves of every possible loophole to carry on their business. Therefore it is our duty to protect the public to-day more than ever. Very soon we shall find, when the processes of the law are being

carried out, that the man who bought blocks of land for £500 a piece, and at the end of five years had only been able to pay £12 on each block, a total of £60, will be called upon to pay out another £400 on each block. If he has any assets they can be distrained upon, because this Bill only provides for the future, and not for the past. The measure is not drastic enough to help those who are in need. I hope the member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan) and the member for West Perth (Mr. McDonald) will, in Committee, be able to draft something that will give these people the necessary protection. It is our duty to protect persons who, by misrepresentation and guile, have got into a position from which they cannot escape. Everything they possess can be distrained upon. It behoves this House to see that justice is done. I am not concerned about those who are able to look after themselves. My sympathy lies with those who through lack of education and lack of knowledge of business technicalities, have signed contract forms that were put in front of them. If the existing law had made the provision for mortgages that this Bill deals with, and had provided for the period of seven days in which to inspect the land that might have been purchased, many of the cases we now have to deal with would never have arisen. I support the Bill in the hope that in Committee some amendment will be made along the lines I have indicated.

On motion by Mr. McDonald, debate adjourned.

## ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1933-34.

### *In Committee of Supply.*

Resumed from the 2nd November; Mr. Hegnøy in the Chair.

Department of the Minister for Lands and Immigration (Hon. M. F. Troy, Minister).

*Vote—Lands and Surveys, £49,089 (partly considered):*

**MR. FERGUSON** (Irwin-Moore) [6.8]: It is a matter for great regret that the Minister for Lands, when bringing down his Estimates, was unable to adopt the optimistic tone of his colleague, the Minister for Mines.

Mr. Latham: He has had his share in times gone by.

Mr. FERGUSON: No doubt his turn will come again some day.

Mr. F. C. L. Smith: Can you nominate the date?

Mr. FERGUSON: If I were called upon to do so I might suggest that it would coincide with the date of the next general election. Notwithstanding the difficult times the Lands Department has been through during the past year or so, its activities provide a pretty fair barometer as to the condition of the agricultural industry. They serve to indicate the amount of confidence that would-be settlers are reposing in our broad acres. We are told that approximately half-a-million acres were selected during the past year and three million acres of pastoral land, and that the Agricultural Bank have been able to dispose of several hundred farms. Seeing that we have been faced with a crisis, the like of which we have never previously experienced, that is not a bad performance for the department to put up. Referring to wire-netting, the Minister said the department under the wire-netting advances legislation of the Commonwealth Government, had distributed to 2,407 settlers 9,618 miles of netting, and 245 tons of wire, the total cost being £441,000. I gather from the Auditor-General's report that there is still a balance in the fund of £108,000. In view of the serious inroads that are being made by the rabbit pest in the agricultural areas, I think the Minister will receive numerous applications for netting during the coming year, and it is very doubtful whether the £108,000 will be sufficient to meet all requirements.

The Minister for Lands: I am doubtful whether we shall get any more, because it was a lump sum in the beginning, and all of it was not used. Now that the agreement has expired I do not know that we shall be entitled to the balance that is unspent. I am taking the matter up with the authorities to see what can be done about it.

Mr. FERGUSON: It would be rather hard upon this State, if, because of a year or two of adversity, we were unable to utilise the whole fund that was made available by the Commonwealth, we were to be deprived of the balance unexpended at a time when we need it. I trust the Minister will be able to persuade the Commonwealth Government to let us have the balance of £606,000. It is absolutely essential that a larger sum of money than that should be made available for this necessary work.

The Minister knows, from his own experience, the ravages that are made by this pest upon the farmers' crops and pastures, and will agree that many hundreds of thousands of miles of netting are necessary to protect the interests of our people. Recently, in reply to a question asked by the member for Pingelly, the Minister stated that wire-netting of the inch and a half type was that which was generally adopted in Australia, and that, though it was admitted the smaller mesh would be more effective, the additional cost to the settler of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. would not be justified. From the evidence which has recently been placed before me, I question whether we have not, perhaps, made a big blunder in supplying so much of the inch and a half netting. I doubt the efficacy of netting of that size. Many users have regretted that they took the inch-and-a-half mesh instead of the inch-and-a-quarter, and have stated that they would have preferred to spend the additional money in order that their fences might be more effective in keeping out the rabbits. I have here a sample of the two kinds of netting, and would like the Minister and members to inspect it for themselves. In practice there is a vast difference between the two sizes. A rabbit could not possibly get through mesh of an inch-and-a-quarter, but could readily squeeze through netting of a larger size.

Mr. Doney: Would the inch-and-a-quarter netting keep out rabbits for all time? Would they not come in just the same?

Mr. FERGUSON: If members will put one piece of netting inside the other, they will see the difference between them. One size is quite big enough to allow a rabbit to squeeze through, but in the case of the smaller size the animal could not get through. Officers of the agricultural department have for years stated that netting of an inch and a half mesh is sufficient for all purposes. It is upon that advice the Minister for Lands has made his distributions to the farmers. No one can blame the Minister. We now have had several years of experience of wire netting, and I think it would be wise if we were to profit by it.

Mr. Doney: Almost all the private purchasers use inch-and-a-half mesh.

Mr. FERGUSON: I believe it is now the policy of those who are outside the scheme of distribution to buy inch-and-a-quarter meshing. I want to net-in my farm, but have no desire to erect several miles of

fencing, only to find it is ineffective. During the last few days I wrote to two of my electors, who have farms in the Moora district, and have their properties fenced with rabbit netting.

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

Mr. FERGUSON: Prior to the tea adjournment, I was about to deal with the position of two adjoining properties east of Moora. One property is the well-known Cranmore Park, owned by the Boolardy Pastoral Company and managed by Mr. E. H. B. Lefroy. The other is Tootra Station, the property of the New Zealand and Australian Land Company, and managed by Mr. R. H. Wallace. Cranmore Park is fenced with  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch mesh netting and Tootra Station with  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch mesh netting. In view of the evidence placed before me as to the ineffectiveness of  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch netting, I wrote to the managers of the two properties I have mentioned with a view to securing direct evidence from them because I felt sure that any opinion they expressed would be reliable and dependable. I know the managers of both properties, and I can assure the Committee that every reliance can be placed on their statements. I will read the views they expressed in communications to me. I will deal with Cranmore Park first. In writing to me Mr. Lefroy said—

Four years ago a garden area at the homestead was enclosed with  $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. netting. Much difficulty was experienced through young rabbits entering the garden, so much so that many plants were destroyed before the rabbits could be caught. How they could get in was a puzzle; gates and the fence were well erected. Eventually the gardener killed a small rabbit, which he had actually seen pass through the netting into the garden. On seeing so large a rabbit, I refused to believe that it could go through a normal  $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. mesh, but on trying, found that it could be slipped through with ease. A strip of  $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. mesh netting, six inches in the ground and one foot out of the ground, was attached to the existing netting two years ago. There has not since been a rabbit in the garden. This experience was reported to the Moora Vermin Board, and the report was sent on by the board to the Government recommending, at the same time, discontinuance of the use of  $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. netting. The official attitude appears to be that any rabbit, which could pass through  $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. netting, would not remain alive away from its mother. That might be correct under dry conditions, but as our breeding season in Western Australia takes place in cool weather, when there is ample succulent feed, there can be no doubt at all about most of the rabbits

living and thriving. Recently a ratepayer who had previously doubted the accuracy of these statements, came and reported to the Moora Vermin Board his own experience. He, too, had lately fenced his garden with  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in. rabbit netting. Small rabbits were found inside the garden. He still was not satisfied, so made a cage of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in. rabbit netting, and put some young rabbits in it. They got out through the mesh. The same ratepayer informed the board that his neighbour had reported to him that he had found with astonishment, that young rabbits could get through the meshes of his  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in. fence. Our own men have reported having seen the same. The remedy appears plain:  $1\frac{1}{4}$  in. mesh for the six inches under the ground, and for the first 12 inches above the ground, the balance to be of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in. mesh. The manufacturer complains that this would mean the altering of his machine. I earnestly submit that the policy of the State should be towards a design on the lines of that described here, and that tenders should be called for further requirements accordingly. This rabbit scourge is becoming more and more acute and more and more difficult to deal with, and it seems the position will be hopeless, failing the most thorough and the most effective methods of attack.

This is an extract from the letter sent to me by Mr. Wallance of Tootra Station—

Yours of the 19th inst. to hand, and I wish to state that the boundary fence at Tootra is  $1\frac{1}{4}$  in. netting, but one of our fences has  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in., and I have noticed on a couple of occasions where a small rabbit, which I certainly think would live, has gone through the  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in. netting. I do not think there is any doubt that the  $1\frac{1}{4}$  in. netting is much superior and well worth the difference in cost.

In view of these statements, I ask the Minister for Lands to at least give serious consideration to the question whether, seeing that the farmers of Western Australia have largely used  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch mesh netting, it would not be wiser to alter that policy and adopt the smaller mesh. We may find that, as the rabbits become more and more numerous, our existing fences will be ineffective. The Minister is a practical man and will realise that there is a divergence of opinion on this question. Rather than accept the views expressed to him by his officials—those views, I believe, are in accord with those held by most of the people in this State—would it not be wise to have a further investigation to ascertain whether the statements made by the two gentlemen whose letters I have quoted, and by dozens of other practical men who have given similar testimony, should not warrant future netting supplies to clients of the Lands Department being of  $1\frac{1}{4}$ -inch mesh. Failing that, will the Min-

ister endeavour to make arrangements—I know it is largely a matter of finance—so that people who are satisfied it is essential for the proper development of their properties to use  $1\frac{1}{4}$ -inch mesh netting, will be able to do so? I understand there is nothing in the Commonwealth legislation to prohibit that course being adopted, and the only factor requiring consideration is that of the additional cost. I urge upon the Minister the advisability of giving the matter further consideration along the lines I suggest, in the interests of the farming community generally. That is the only object I have in mind in discussing the matter, because I am convinced that quite a lot of careful, thoughtful, solid opinion is swinging in behind the belief that the  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch mesh netting is not effective. I think that matter can safely be left in the hands of the Minister. In the course of his speech in introducing his Estimates, the Minister referred to some of the other activities of his department and he dealt with the salt investigations by Dr. Teakle. I am inclined to think that the Minister in his remarks was not quite fair to Dr. Teakle. He said he wished to be fair, but I am afraid he left on the minds of his hearers and of those who read the report of his remarks, an impression that he was not quite satisfied with the work Dr. Teakle was doing. The inference might be drawn from his remarks that Dr. Teakle was not carrying out his duties in the way the State might expect.

Mr. Griffiths: And that one could not rely upon his opinion.

Mr. FERGUSON: I do not think the Minister went quite that far. I do not hold any brief for Dr. Teakle, but during the time I was in charge of the Department of Agriculture, of which Dr. Teakle is an officer, although his services are being used at present for this particular work by the Lands Department, I came into close contact with him and could not but be impressed with him as an officer. It seemed to me he was one of the most capable officers of the department, and, in my opinion, he was doing remarkably well the work he was instructed to carry out. The Minister referred to Dr. Teakle as a theorist. I do not know of any man who is a scientist, but at the same time is a more practical man than Dr. Teakle. He comes of a practical family. His father and his grandfather are farming in the Northampton area and his forbears were farming for hundreds of

years before him. He was brought up on a farm in this State and the whole of his training during his younger days tended to make him a practical man. The scientific knowledge he has gained in recent years, combined with the practical nature of the man himself, have particularly suited him for the work entrusted to him since he has been with the Department of Agriculture. After Dr. Teakle had been educated at the University of Western Australia, where he studied under Professor Paterson and took his B.Sc. degree, he went abroad and studied at the University of California where he took his M.Sc. degree. He was abroad for several years, during which period he devoted his energies, time and talents to the investigation of soil and plant nutrition problems. Thus, when he returned to the Department of Agriculture in Western Australia, he was probably as well equipped in those particular phases of agriculture as anyone else whose services it would have been possible to obtain within the State or within the Commonwealth. At the University of California, he studied under several well-known professors, one of whom, Professor Hoagland, is stated to be one of the leading plant nutrition authorities of the world. He has been described by leading experts in England, including Sir John Russell, as one of the foremost soil authorities in the world. Dr. Teakle studied with that professor and, therefore, his education was an efficient as would be possible anywhere. In addition, Professor Prescott, who is the head of the soil division of the Scientific and Industrial Research Council of Australia, when on a visit to Western Australia some time ago, spoke highly of Dr. Teakle's qualifications and said he was peculiarly fitted to carry out the work entrusted to him. Since Dr. Teakle has returned from America, he has concentrated on soil and plant nutrition work, and I venture to assert that had his services been available to the department at an earlier stage in its history, the producers of Western Australia would have benefited tremendously.

Mr. Latham: We might never have settled the Avon Valley.

Mr. FERGUSON: I have heard that said before, and by less responsible men than the Leader of the Opposition. Dr. Teakle has never said that the Avon Valley should not have been settled. He has pointed out,

time and again, that the salt problem with which he has dealt has been mainly in the Esperance areas and in that part of the State associated with the 3,500 farms scheme. It has repeatedly been said that there is no similar problem in the Avon Valley or the eastern districts, and I am at a loss to understand why the Leader of the Opposition should have made such a remark. If Dr. Teakle had been here when the Avon Valley was being settled, it is quite possible that a whole lot of mistakes which were then made might never have been made. The areas of salt land in the Avon Valley to-day, which have been caused only by the clearing of timber on the higher lands, would never have been there, because Dr. Teakle would have advised the people to leave more forest land uncleared.

Mr. Mann: There is very little salt land in the Avon Valley.

Mr. FERGUSON: Then why say that if Dr. Teakle had been here when it was being settled, it might never have been settled? I have had the privilege of seeing some of Dr. Teakle's work on the State farm at Salmon Gums, and I only wish the member for that district had been here this evening so that he could have told us some of the results of that work.

The Minister for Lands: Salt was discovered there before ever Dr. Teakle went there.

Mr. FERGUSON: That is not correct. They did not discover it before he went there. As a matter of fact, the failure of crops on the State farm and in the Salmon Gums district generally was attributed to everything under the sun. When first I went there, there was no such thing as a salt problem.

Mr. Latham: Why years ago Professor Paterson declared there was salt there!

Mr. FERGUSON: They said the cause of the failure of crops was blight, and all sorts of other things.

The Minister for Lands: The trustees of the Agricultural Bank 20 years ago said the land was salty.

Mr. FERGUSON: No, the evidence placed before the Royal Commission that inquired into that area did not say the failure was due to salt. There was a suggestion of salt, but the failure of crops was not ascribed to that. When I was there, the local farmers on areas that year after year had failed to grow a crop, assigned for that failure all

sorts of reasons other than salt. If the member for Kanowna were here tonight, he would support me in that statement. The Minister for Lands said that Dr. Teakle had been flitting around the country doing a lot of unnecessary travelling, and so frittering away the taxpayers' money. I do not know what Dr. Teakle is doing now, but when I was in the department he did not waste a lot of the State's money in that way.

The Minister for Lands: His travelling about has cost thousands of pounds.

Mr. FERGUSON: Every officer of the department who has to travel the country must spend some money in that way.

The Minister for Lands: It does not matter so much, if the officer is doing effective work.

Mr. FERGUSON: I have heard of the Minister himself being accused of flitting about the country and spending the State's money. I am not condemning the Minister because of that, nor do I condemn Dr. Teakle.

The Minister for Lands: At all events, I was not condemning land.

Mr. FERGUSON: Neither has Dr. Teakle. He has simply put up a report with a plan and indicated on that plan which was soil of low-salt content, and which was of high-salt content; and he was particular to say that in an average season, where there was more than a certain percentage of salinity in the soil it would not be safe to attempt to grow a crop on it. We have been told that settlers have grown good crops on some of the soil condemned by Dr. Teakle.

Mr. Stubbs: And that is quite true.

Mr. FERGUSON: I have heard the hon. member say that before. I should like to ask whether the hon. member making that interjection has ever seen Dr. Teakle's reports or any plans prepared by him.

Mr. Stubbs: Of course I have.

Mr. FERGUSON: He has seen the Lake Grace country and certain areas which Dr. Teakle has said that, with a light rainfall, it would not be safe to go farming upon. But those areas upon which settlers are said to have grown good crops repeatedly, probably they would be found in Dr. Teakle's classification as lands which, while having a high salt content in the subsoil,

could grow good crops in a reasonable rainfall but that in seasons of light rainfall there would be great risk of non-profitable crops being grown.

Mr. Stubbs: I am not disputing that.

Mr. FERGUSON: I want to point out to the Minister that this soil classification is not the only activity upon which Dr. Teakle has been engaged. When he did his so-called flitting about the country he was carrying out instructions of one of the departments for which he was working. We have had a great deal of trouble in the Denmark district with the wasting disease, and Dr. Teakle, with the officers of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, has been engaged with soil problems in that locality, and of course he has had to visit the district. He has been instructed to make an examination of Herdsman's Lake. I venture to say that had he been in this State and been able to give the advice he is capable of giving now, the £100,000 odd that the State spent on Herdsman's Lake would never have been spent. He has been instructed to go up in the northern districts to Dartmoor, and to go into the far eastern areas to the Ghooli State farm: he has had to carry out those various activities, and so it was not quite fair to accuse him of flitting around the country frittering away the taxpayers' money. To get an indication of what the people of Salmon Gums think of the work of Dr. Teakle, one has only to go into that district to secure firsthand information. The other day, when the Minister for Agriculture returned from that district, he made this statement to the Press—

The research work done by Dr. Teakle in his soil survey of the district has placed him in a position to say very definitely that from a scientific and theoretical point of view certain types of land are unsuitable for wheat, and his verdict coincides both with the records of farming in the district and with the results of careful experiments made on the Government Experiment Farm at Salmon Gums. This season there is one paddock on the farm, with nice sandy soil, which the manager estimates will average 18 bushels to the acre, while the crops on the heavy clayey land and the kopi soil are a failure.

The timber by no means definitely determines the quality of the soil or its suitability for the cultivation of wheat, but so much information is now available as a result of Dr. Teakle's work that experienced farmers are themselves able to form a good idea of the type of soil upon which wheat may be grown with success.



Concerning the utilisation of the balance of the country, much investigatory work remains to be done, but it appears that it will grow very fairly well, and oats also to an extent. I regard Dr. Teakle's work as of the utmost importance to the district, for he is enabling the settlers to determine in advance which land should be placed under wheat. The cost of the soil survey is given as 1½d. per acre. Under the old method a settler would have learned his land, fenced it and cultivated it before he learned whether or not it was suitable for his purpose. Now, at a cost of 1½d. per acre, he is able to procure the same information in advance. That is an illuminating comparison between out-of-date and up-to-date methods as applied to agriculture.

As far as I am able to judge, the value of soil surveys, soil classifications and plant nutrition investigations is playing a much greater part in the development of agriculture in every country of the world to-day than it did in the past. Because of that, it was very wise in the Government of the day to appoint a man like Dr. Teakle, with the qualifications he possesses, in order that he might avoid the waste of so much money, either governmental or private, in the development of lands entirely unsuitable for the purpose. Soil survey defines the various types of soil and gives opportunity to those about to select land to know what those soils are capable of. It is work on which the Government can well spend a little money. As a farmer, I have made mistakes in the treatment of soil, and there are thousands of others who have done the same. Had they had the knowledge which is available to them to-day, and which men of the calibre of Dr. Teakle possess, a lot of those mistakes would not have been made. To indicate how this work of soil classification is being undertaken in the other States, I may say that in several of the States investigations such as Dr. Teakle has undertaken here are being carried out. It is fortunate that they are, because they have avoided the expenditure of hundreds of thousands of pounds which might otherwise have been undertaken by Governments in their desire to settle any and every class of land whether suitable for settlement or not. The bulk of the soil classification work in Australia to-day is being done on a system. As the result of knowledge gained in other parts of the world and co-ordination of the work here in Australia, we are doing the same in Western Australia as is being done in the other States. The bulk of it is being done

under the supervision of Professor Prescott, the head of the soil division of the C.S.I.R. and head of the department in the Waite Institute in South Australia. It is being carried out by the officers of the Department of Agriculture in the various States. During recent years the C.S.I.R. have issued a number of bulletins dealing with this matter, and the information they contain is highly valuable. I could wish that more members of Parliament and more of the public of Western Australia would avail themselves of the knowledge contained in some of those bulletins. In New South Wales recently the authorities have spent a considerable amount of money on the soil investigations in the Murrumbidgee irrigation areas, with a view to endeavouring to correct some of the mistakes made in the treatment of the soils. In one of the bulletins issued by the C.S.I.R. the other day I noticed this—

Soil surveys have been carried out on five settlements in the region of the Murray Valley, aggregating 9,300 acres mainly planted to horticultural crops. The areas are scattered over about 60 miles of typical mallee country in the vicinity of Swan Hill, ranging from Goodnight (New South Wales) in the north to Kangaroo Lake (Victoria) in the south. Considerable decreases in cropped area have occurred on one settlement (Tresear), and a proportion of each has been rendered unproductive by an excessive increase in soil salinity. . . . The soil position on the settlements has been outlined, mentioning the distribution and extent of the several soils, irrigation and drainage necessities, the importance of soil salinity, and its sphere of influence on each area.

I also notice that recently a project was placed before the South Australian Government regarding the development of a large area of land at Lake Albert. It was proposed to spend a lot of money there to open up the territory. Before doing so, the soil classification officers were asked to make an investigation. Here is an extract from one of the bulletins I have mentioned and which I would like to read to the House—

The survey of the bed of Lake Albert was undertaken by the Council's Division of Soil Research, as a result of a request from the South Australian Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, acting in conjunction with the Development and Migration Commission of the Commonwealth, that the Chief of the Division of Soil Research should co-operate with the Director of Agriculture of South Australia in reporting upon the type, quality, and suitability of the soil in Lake Albert for dry-farming, or for production under irrigation.

The present communication is an account of the survey, its technique and scientific results. The point of practical importance in the report is that the work of the division has demonstrated that the area examined would be little suited for agricultural purposes, and thus that a drainage scheme, estimated to cost many thousands of pounds sterling, would be quite unwarranted. In other words, the expenditure of the inappreciable sum involved in the division's operations, together with the application of recently developed methods of soil examination, have shown the way to the avoidance of what might otherwise have been a costly mistake in land settlement.

The point I wish to make is that, if there had been no soil classification officers in South Australia of the type of Professor Prescott and Dr. Teakle, no doubt an extensive settlement would have been undertaken in the Lake Albert area, and probably there would have been a repetition of our experience. There was another instance in South Australia in the Murray River irrigation areas. The Government spent over £1,000,000 in one settlement, and £300,000 of that amount has been written-off because it is considered that the soil in the localities where the money has been spent is unsuitable for production. I should like the Minister for Lands to remember that, if there is going to be any extensive land settlement in Western Australia in future, it is likely to be in those areas that are on the fringe of settlement to-day. Most of those areas are in light rainfall districts, certainly districts of lighter rainfall than the bulk of the country settled so far. We cannot afford to make any costly mistakes in those areas. The State cannot afford to repeat the mistakes of the past. I venture the opinion to the Minister, who I know is an intensely practical man, that it would be wise to take notice of men who have had scientific training in other parts of the world as well as in Western Australia, particularly when the result of the knowledge gained abroad coincides with that of what we are pleased to term the practical farmer in this State. Wherever Dr. Teakle has been and in all the areas where he has decided that there is a high salt content, the farmers themselves have proved that the crops on such areas are not as good as in other localities. While they have attributed the failure of crops to other reasons, it seems to me to be largely due to the fact that the high salt content of those soils so weakens the crop as to make it impossible for the plant to stand up against the adverse conditions inseparable

from a dry spell at a critical period of the growth. We can profitably be guided by the advice of scientists who have made a study of the problems that confront us, problems that practical farmers have no time or opportunity and probably not sufficient knowledge to study for themselves. It is the duty of the State to endeavour to foster settlement and increase production by all possible means, and I hold that one of the best ways to do it is to have scientific officers of the calibre of Dr. Teakle, because the information he can make available is of the utmost value to the State. I mention this particularly because I think the Minister, in introducing his Estimates, was unwittingly not quite fair to the officer in question, and do not want a false impression of that officer to go abroad. Having had three years' intimate association with him in the Department of Agriculture, I could not fail to be impressed with his ability. I believe the present Minister for Agriculture would support my remarks; I am sure the members for Kanowna were he present, would do so because a lot of Dr. Teakle's work has come under his notice. I believe the member for Subiaco visited that part of the State recently in company with the Minister for Agriculture, and, judging by the hon. member's remarks to me, he also was impressed with what he saw. I believe he could tell us if he would do so, that the recommendation of Dr. Teakle were substantiated in actual practice by the farming community of that district.

**MR. GRIFFITHS (Avon) [8.5] :** I do not intend to deal with the minor problem of settlers on the land. Undoubtedly, such problems as soil salinity, the question of coping with the rabbit pest and whether 1½-inch or 1¼-inch mesh netting is the more efficient for the weed problems, and all those things are not occupying the minds of settlers so much as is the larger question of the rehabilitation of the industry. When I hear of those minor troubles, I am reminded of the remarks of the humorist, David Harum, who said it was a good thing for the dog to have fleas because it kept him busy scratching and made him forget that he was a dog. Perhaps some of those troubles occupy the minds of the farmers and prevent them from thinking too much of the bigger problem as to how they are going to carry on in future. There are plans and plans for keeping the farmers on the land. Mr. White, the Direc

or under the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act, has presented a scheme in evidence before the Agricultural Bank Royal Commission. I understand also that certain amendments, proposed by the Primary Producers' Association, are to be made to the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act, which will make for greater security by giving the director wider powers to handle creditors. I believe the Wheatgrowers' Union have a plan that they are anxious shall be submitted to Parliament and discussed. Recently a meeting was held at Merredin attended by 300 farmers, not only members of the Wheatgrowers' Union but members of the Primary Producers' Association and representatives of the Australian Labour Party, the Agricultural Society and traders—practically the whole of the community. They were not concerned so much about soil salinity or netting-mesh troubles as they were about the problem of carrying on in the future. I hope the various schemes will be investigated and that we shall have an opportunity to discuss them. The session is drawing to a close and the Minister has told us that nothing can be done in the matter of reconditioning debts. If it is going to be a question of awaiting the report of the Royal Commission on the Agricultural Bank, I ask the Minister to consider the outlook of the people on the land. Members here might become weary of us who are always talking of the troubles of farmers, but it is more tiresome for them to have to put up with those troubles and battle on almost hopelessly, as many of them are doing. I hope some measure will be introduced that will give the farmers hope. There are the matters of security of tenure and the conditioning of debts. We are told that the time is not ripe to consider those matters. We were told that 12 months ago and it is still being said. We tell the farmer that the time is not ripe, and that it is necessary to wait until conditions become more stable. The reply of the farmers is that they will be stabilised out of their holdings and the debts will disappear entirely, and that there will be no chance of reconditioning debts if the matter is not soon undertaken. The Director under the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act has some idea of getting the Federal authorities to step in to provide credit or some form of note issue for the assistance of the States on an acreage basis. He considers that the problem of rehabilitating the wheat-growing industry is too big for the States and that

it will have to be handled by the Federal Government. Be that as it may, we who represent the wheat-growers are expected to voice the views of the farmers and endeavour to get something done that will bring finality. Only by the reconditioning of debts and by granting security of tenure is there any reasonable prospect for the future, and those things I have been urging for three years. I hope that before the session closes something will be done to give the farmers hope, and that a re-organisation of the industry will be carried into effect. There is one thing we have been preaching for years and that is the need for getting our wheat-growers to undertake mixed farming—wheat and sheep. In some of the eastern areas many things could be done that would ease the store bill and enable the home to be conducted at reduced cost, but those things are neglected. The settlers have not the finance with which to enter into sheep, but some men have started off with a few old ewes and have gradually built up a flock and improved it. They have thus been enabled to provide a little meat for their own families and sell a little to neighbours, and thus have gradually introduced sheep into their farming operations. A cow, a few pigs and poultry should be found on every farm. On many of the up-to-date farms in the more settled parts of the State, those side-lines are found, but further out they are the exception. As regards sheep, the farmers cannot afford the necessary netting, and it is somewhat futile to talk of running sheep if there is no possibility of getting netting to keep them within bounds. I do not intend to speak at length on this vote. I shall have more to say on the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture, though not on the aspect I have been stressing. Country members, one and all, are seriously perturbed to get something definite from Parliament as to the future of the wheat-growing industry, which, after all, is one of the mainstays of the State. With that remark I shall conclude, reserving further comments until the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture are reached.

**MR. BROCKMAN** (Sussex) [813]; I listened with keen interest to the Minister's speech in introducing his Estimates. He spoke of the new settlement at Nannup inaugurated by the previous Government and based, I consider, on sound lines. For a time, the settlers appeared to be progressive, but during the last six months or more

they have seemingly been at a standstill. The capitalisation of the holdings is increasing greatly and the settlers are becoming more or less dissatisfied. I hope that in the near future the Minister will visit the Nannup settlement and inform the settlers of what they may expect from the Government. I visited those holdings on Sunday last, and it was very pleasing indeed to observe the growth of the grass, and to note how well the stock were looking; but improvements did not seem to me to be increasing as they should be. I wish also to refer to the settlers who were placed on the holdings at Busselton. I have not very great faith in the country east of Busselton on which they were placed, and I feel that if men like Messrs. Forrest and Carter condemned that country, as the Minister has stated they did, their advice is worth accepting, and can well be accepted by the Minister. Before the Minister condemns the country finally, however, I hope he will again inspect it, because I am told the pastures on it are looking very well indeed. Perhaps he may alter his opinion, because even the best of us may make mistakes, particularly in regard to our south-west lands, which vary very considerably indeed. I would like to say a few words with regard to the land the Minister is proposing to cut up between Nannup and Augusta. I hope the development of that land will proceed on more economical lines than in the past. I hope the Government will develop that country more by ring-barking and chopping blackboy, instead of putting settlers on it in its virgin state. In the southern portion of this State development of land has taken place over a period of years and this proposed new country can be developed far more cheaply if it is rung and suckered for from two to five years. I consider that country should be brought under productivity at an expense of about £7 per acre, whereas, by methods in use to-day, it would cost from £35 to £40 per acre, which is far too high. It is in excess of the value of the land. I would also like to speak about the large area of country classified by the late Government between Augusta and Pemberton. I know the country, and it is very fine land indeed. I was sorry to hear the member for Guildford-Midland say that the eyes had been picked

out of the South-West, and that all the good land had gone. That is incorrect. He really does not know the country, but I have been over every part of it. I do not want to see any more group settlements started until such time as we have proved that the existing ones are a success. I feel satisfied there will be a success if properly handled; but there is no reason why we should not prepare country at a moderate cost for future settlement. There is a large area of land between Augusta and Pemberton which would settle up to one thousand settlers perhaps more. If it is developed economically it will be a success, but I would not like to see settlers placed on it under the same conditions as group settlers have been placed on virgin country. That country can be developed very much more cheaply by ring-barking and chopping blackboy. In regard to present settlement, much country has been cleared at the Margaret River, but I do not approve of that settlement. It is capitalised to the extent of £17 per acre and is only half developed now. I would much rather the Government transferred the unemployed from undeveloped land to existing holdings to bring them up to their full productivity. Thus the settlers might be able to market sufficient butter fat and so meet their commitments.

The Minister for Employment: The Government have already made a pronouncement in that respect.

Mr. BROCKMAN: I am pleased to hear that. I think all the settlers will be very pleased to hear it too, but I would like some information about the method which will be employed to develop the holdings. In the settlements are placed under foremen, as has been done in the past, I do not think it will be very successful. I have always thought that the Imperial and Commonwealth Governments should share with our Government in the group settlement losses. I think the agreement was a tripartite one and therefore the State Government should not bear the whole of the loss. That to me has seemed neither fair nor right, and I think it will be wise for the Minister to see whether the Government cannot obtain some redress from the Imperial and Commonwealth Governments. I do not think there is anything further I can say on the matter.

**MR. J. H. SMITH (Nelson)** [8.22]: I listened with a great deal of interest to the Minister for Lands when introducing the Estimates of his department. He appeared rather pessimistic, but nevertheless said he was convinced that when wheat prices recovered everything in the garden would be lovely. Could the Minister inform us when there is a possibility of wheat prices recovering? Is it not time that members looked further afield, and advocated intense culture? I listened also with a great deal of interest to what the Minister said as to group settlements and the forty-seven abandoned blocks in the Busselton area. I will say something about them later on. I then listened to the criticisms of the Minister's advocacy of the Estimates. The member for Irwin-Moore (Mr. Ferguson) made a very long speech.

Mr. Ferguson: I did not.

**MR. J. H. SMITH:** The hon. member endeavoured to spread a lot of treacle over Dr. Teakle. To my mind it is a very great pity that Dr. Teakle did not come into prominence before the present Government diverted the money which was to have been used for the building of the Boyup Brook-Cranbrook railway. It is a pity Dr. Teakle was not there then. However, I do not believe in this treacle for Dr. Teakle at all. If Dr. Teakle were to go over the wheat land, then we would find we had salt in every part of Western Australia. Practical people know that even to-day the land which is supposed to be sweet in the South-West will, if ring-barked in the gullies, become salt. The salt spreads and we have to let the bluegums grow again. But Dr. Teakle has gone right throughout this country, from one end to the other, and condemned it *holus bolus*. I am not pitting the member for Irwin-Moore against scores of my friends who are successful agriculturists and successful wheatgrowers in this State. But they say that Dr. Teakle would condemn all the land in the State because of its salinity. My friend lives in the Upper Swan district, where the settlers exist on a bonus paid by the dried-fruit industry. They are on the pig's back; it does not matter to them.

Mr. Ferguson: That is not correct.

**MR. J. H. SMITH:** It is. The hon. member will probably agree with me when I say that I wish Dr. Teakle had come into prominence earlier in the piece. I wish he had come into prominence before the Govern-

ment in their wisdom started on their migration and development scheme and diverted the money that should rightly have been spent in the South-West portion of this State. A vast area of land could have been opened up then. The Advisory Board stated that 2,500 people could be settled successfully in the South-West. We would have had our railway and we would have had our country settled. I want to inform the Minister that I hope the Premier will come to my district on the 24th of this month and, failing him, the Minister for Agriculture.

The Premier: I think we will both go.

**MR. J. H. SMITH:** We can show them land better than any other land in all the world.

Members: Hear, hear!

**MR. J. H. SMITH:** If necessary, I will place statistics on the Table of the House to prove that 400 acres of land in the district, which all the experts say is the greatest in the world, is depasturing 3,000 sheep all the year round. It has carried 11,000 sheep, and that is the land which would be traversed by the proposed Boyup Brook-Cranbrook railway. There is no disputing the fact that the Government are being pressed to build railways on country leading to wheat lands. Yet the Minister for Lands himself states that there is no hope for land settlement unless wheat prices improve. What do the Government mean by binding themselves or hoodwinking themselves to build railways where wheat only is grown?

The CHAIRMAN: I do not think the hon. member is in order in discussing railways.

**MR. J. H. SMITH:** I am talking about land settlement. It is inadvisable to settle people on wheat lands. Let us get down to facts. Let us put the people where they can make a livelihood, in this vast undeveloped country in the South-West, on which two advisory boards have said that 2,500 people can be settled. Let the Government build railways where the rainfall is assured, where we can have intense culture, where the settlers can make a living from the word go, where in the olden days, the pioneers of 50 and 60 years ago grew their wheat and gristed it themselves. Four hundred acres of this land can carry 3,000 sheep all the year round.

Member: The pioneers also had kangaroos to live on.

**Mr. J. H. SMITH:** There would be no necessity for settlers to do that now, as they could live on mutton. Just recently a lady returned from the Old Country. She was sent across by the Overseas Legion to make inquiries about the group settlements. I believe the Minister was invited to attend a dinner to hear the report made by that lady, but he was unable to be present. I was invited, but unfortunately was also unable to attend. I do not know whether the Minister was present. I believe this lady was an envoy or ambassador of people who had millions of pounds of English capital which they wished to invest in Western Australia, provided it was expended in the South-West portion of the State, not the North-West portion. Is not that what we require? Would it not be advisable for the Premier to-morrow to make a commencement with the building of the Boyup Brook-Cranbrook railway, which has already received the authorisation of Parliament? Would it not be advisable for the Premier to-morrow to say to the Railway Department and the Public Works Department, "Proceed with the building of that railway; you have the sleepers, the land is cleared; and two advisory boards have said that 2,500 farms can be established on it." Instead of their being put on to wheat areas, why not settle them in that part of the State where there is an assured rainfall of 30 inches and where grass can be grown in abundance. If we opened up that part of the State, we could send to the Old Country and say, "We are prepared to take your immigrants now provided you establish them." The people at Home are crying out in their anxiety to populate our South-West with people who will be entirely under their control. Of course we must give them facilities by building the railway. I am afraid the agriculturists in the wheat areas will not be successful because of the salinity which exists everywhere. As a matter of fact, it is even in the white gum country in the South-West. Speaking of group settlements, the Minister struck a discordant note, and he admitted it was an impossible position that existed at the present time. We all realise that it is impossible for those who are on the land to carry on in the present circumstances. The Minister referred to 47 blocks in the Busselton area that were condemned by the Agricultural Bank which would not make any further advances. The Unemployment Board came along and put settlers on those abandoned holdings at so

much per week. The Agricultural Bank refuses to carry them on. What are we going to do about the whole thing? The position is the same in respect of all settlement in Western Australia, whether it be wheat, wool or dairying. The price of wheat is so low that those who are engaged in the industry cannot make a livelihood. We have to apply to the Federal Government to give us a bonus on our wheat. Our wool industry is a little better, but our fruit industry is down to the lowest ebb. People generally are under the impression that the fruit growers are having a good time. I admit that the dried-fruit growers along the Upper Swan are protected and doing well, but growers of fresh fruit are having a particularly bad time. If people knew the condition of the apple growers they would realise quickly enough that it was as bad as that of the wheat-growers. Last year they sent away thousands of cases only to get debentures in return.

**Mr. Thorn:** The dried-fruit growers are having their struggle, too.

**Mr. J. H. SMITH:** But they have had a very good time. Anyway I do not wish to disparage their work and I would like to see them faring 50 times better than they are doing to-day. But we are up against a problem, and we must admit, as the Minister has stated in no uncertain manner, that it is a problem. The Minister says he does not know a way out. Neither does anybody else. A Royal Commission is to-day investigating the position of the Agricultural Bank and I do not hesitate to say that they will not be able to suggest a way out. Who is going to pay? Posterity cannot pay. We must have some alteration of the system. There must be a re-valuation and no matter how painful it may be there must be a writing down. I submitted a motion to this House a little while back and the House accepted it in its entirety. Something will have to be done. In New Zealand some settlers have as many as 10 mortgages on their holdings. We cannot possibly have anything like that. Our people will not work from daylight to dark if they have a number of mortgages staring them in the face. I tell members that if primary production fails, the Perth and the whole metropolitan area will fail. We must assist the Minister to find a way out if there is any possibility of doing so. I freely admit that I cannot see

a way out; certainly not with the settlers carrying the loads that they have at the present time. But if we could open up the country in the South-West to which I have already referred, there might be a way out, though with the existing capitalisation it will be impossible. I do not wish to be pessimistic; the Minister was sufficiently pessimistic without my adding to it. I appeal to the Premier to see whether it is possible to build the railway to which I have referred and which has been promised for so many years. In this way we could provide homes for a number of families and afford them facilities denied to them to-day by reason of their being 30 or 40 miles away from the line. If the railway is built, they can then work out their destinies. It might even then be possible to settle in that part of the State some of the 2,500 farmers. We were told only the other day that there were millions of money available in the Old Country for this kind of settlement. Surely we can provide homes for 1,000 or 2,000 settlers. We should welcome financial help that came from the Old Country and we would get it if we built the railway. Having built the railway, we would have something to offer. Then if fresh capital came to the State, see what it would mean to the metropolitan area. Would not frontages in Hay-street then increase in value?

Mr. Mann: What, by virtue of extending group settlement?

Mr. SMITH: By virtue of British capital is being spent in the group settlements and in the wheat belt, by virtue of population coming to the country. No one can deny that. I sympathise with the Minister who had to introduce the Lands Estimates, and I agree with him that the position is very difficult. Wheat-growers are indeed in a parlous condition to-day. Every country in the world seems to be growing its own wheat. Our agricultural representatives tell us that we can produce wheat cheaper than can any other country in the world. Members who say that do not know what they are talking about. Look at Canada which is snowed up for six months of the year. Then look at our wheat belt where we are dried up for six months of the year. Our average is 12 bushels per acre from the good land. I am leaving out the arid parts of the State where nothing is grown. Compare our 12 bushels with the production in Canada from prac-

tically the same acreage and where, as I have already said, they are snowed under for six months of the year. Canada's yield is 23 bushels to the acre.

Members: No, No!

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I have the figures and can prove it.

The Premier: Show us your figures.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I have not them here, but I can produce them. I will show them to the Premier to-morrow, and I will convince him and my friends on this side of the House that I am right. It is regrettable that the Minister for Lands was obliged to be so pessimistic. But he could not very well have been otherwise when he introduced his Estimates. Surely the Government were aware of the position when they authorised the building of railways to open up further wheat-lands. The Minister told us that he did not know what would happen until wheat prices recovered. Can he tell us when prices will recover, and can he tell us whether Canberra will give us an extra shilling bonus on wheat? That is all I desire to say. I am thankful that I had the opportunity to speak this evening. There is a good deal more that I could have said in regard to group settlement, but I think the Premier now realises the importance of constructing the railway that I have referred to. I am sure the Leader of the Opposition regrets that the Government with which he was connected could not build the railway to open up this wonderful country. If the Premier and the Minister will visit the South-West, they will see some country worth developing. There is no bad land where the rainfall is good. In arid country like the Northam district it is difficult to find really good land, but no matter how poor the soil may be, provided the rainfall is adequate, and fertiliser is used, good pastures can be grown. Reference has been made to wire netting. I believe netting of 1½-inch mesh will keep down rabbits. In the South-West rabbits are as thick as bees. We also have other pests such as dingoes, foxes, the red-legged mite and the lucerne flea.

Mr. Thorn: Wire netting will not keep out the lucerne flea.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: No, but it will keep out other things. I hope the Minister will find an opportunity to visit this wonderful part of the State.

**MR. MANN** (Beverley) [8.47]: Although the wool position has improved, and the value of our sheep has enormously increased, the outlook for our wheat-grower is dark. Unfortunately, as it happens, we have gone in for an extensive policy of land settlement. I hope no more settlement will take place until we have consolidated the areas at present alienated. The man who is growing wheat only, must remain in a critical position unless further assistance is given to him. Undoubtedly there is a shortage of wool in the world. I believe that many of our eastern farms could be turned into sheep propositions if the State Government could arrange for the necessary finance through the Commonwealth authorities. An extensive programme of water conservation would have to be followed, in order that these farms may be turned into mixed farming propositions. These would absorb all our surplus sheep from the Murchison and the Gascoyne. They could be turned into useful wool and lamb-producing centres. On a recent trip to Corrigin, I was surprised to see sheep which had been brought from the Great Southern and had cut 14 lbs. of wool. That country appeals to me as representing a big asset to Western Australia, if it can only be converted to sheep raising. It is essentially fitted for the type of sheep, the heavy-wool animal, that comes from South Australia. We have a large number of sheep in the State, and there is a surplus of ewes on the lower stations. Farmers already have a considerable knowledge of the sheep-raising industry, and would have far more prospect of success if they were placed in a position to carry sheep. I was pleased to hear the member for Nelson speak in such glowing terms of the South-West. I hope the Premier and the Minister will be able to visit the paradise to which he refers. No doubt that part of the State will play a prominent part in the future of Western Australia. I hope it will be possible for the Government to arrange for more assistance to be given to the farmers in the eastern wheat belt, so that they may go in for the raising of sheep. I believe the price of wool will be maintained for a long while. People have said that Australia is carried on the sheep's back; that term may yet be equally applicable to this State. There must be a definite alteration in land values. I hope the inquiries of the Agricultural Bank Royal Commission will prove of benefit to

Western Australia, and that their report will not be pigeon-holed but will be put to good advantage on behalf of the State.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS** (Hon. M. F. Troy—Mt. Magnet—in reply) [8.52]: I assure the member for Irwin-Moore that we are fully aware of Dr. Teakle's attainments. I do not, however, want members to exaggerate the importance of that officer's work. It only leads to a lack of confidence on the part of settlers. To-day many of them are only too willing to grasp opportunities to make excuses for bad results from their farms. If Dr. Teakle makes a statement about the presence of alkali, that is taken as an excuse to ask for further assistance and more concessions. Dr. Teakle is here to-day and 100 miles away to-morrow. I cannot see that any good results can accrue from work of that character. In order that we may have definite and practical results from an officer of his qualifications, he must work to a programme, which must be properly drawn up. I am not prepared to spend any part of the Lands Department vote in paying for the services of an officer who is at Geraldton to-day and at Denmark the day after to-morrow. I do not consider that sort of work is of any value. It cannot get us anywhere, because insufficient time is devoted to any one place to furnish adequate results. Rapid conclusions of that nature only lead to embarrassment to the department, and instil into the farmer lack of confidence in his property. The Lands Department to-day are paying for Dr. Teakle's services. That indicates I am satisfied with the work he is now doing. He is now engaged on a survey and soil classification at Esperance. I concurred in that, because he has already spent 12 months on the work, and will be there for another 12 months. That is a definite programme from which results may be expected. Such results should furnish a guide to land settlement there. In respect to future settlement on the wheat belt, I am prepared to say we ought not to proceed without a survey of the land and a classification of the soil. In that respect Dr. Teakle's services will prove valuable. I am not going to agree to the expenditure of money by an officer who is in one place to-day and 100 miles away to-morrow. He is not getting results, because each journey is merely a visit and worth nothing at all.



When Dr. Teakle's labours are confined to a definite programme of work, such as is being carried out at Esperance, they will prove of value to the State. He would be even more valuable if he could tell the settlers what crops to grow in alkali land. Some of these areas are only slightly affected. There are farms in the Esperance district which have produced payable wheat crops. We have other lands that will not produce wheat because of the excess of alkali, but will grow something, and we want to know what that something is.

Mr. Latham: We want to know to what use we can put these different areas.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, what we can do with the land. All that we know in the department is the statement of the settlers that the land has been condemned by Dr. Teakle. That is something I will not accept. A farm cannot be regarded as condemned because Dr. Teakle says there is a low alkali content here or a high alkali content there. Take the 3,500 farms scheme. That is supposed to be an alkali proposition, but no doubt it will be settled some day for mixed farming purposes. It would probably carry thousands of sheep, and very healthy sheep, too. Esperance will produce fine sheep. I should be surprised if it does not grow better sheep than most of the agricultural areas. There cannot be many diseases there because there is a fair amount of alkali in the soil. It will be found to be healthy, wholesome country for sheep. But what use is it to inspect land that has been alienated for 25 years?

The Premier: The owners know all about it now.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The man whose farm has developed the alkali trouble knows that he must not fallow the soil, but must try to get it under grass and carry stock.

Mr. Mann: Some of the properties will not grow grass.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Because they have gone too far. When we see the alkali appearing, we look upon it as dangerous, and as something to be left alone for wheat-growing. We know all about that without Dr. Teakle's advice. I hope my remarks will not be taken as derogatory to this young man, for he is an officer with high attainments. Anyway, I want now to see his work put to practical use. At present Dr. Teakle is en-

gaged upon a scheme of soil investigation and I am sure that in that work he will achieve good results for the State. I have great respect for his attainments, but I want to see his work directed into the proper channels. That is being done by the department at the present time. With regard to wire netting, the farmers have to decide between an expensive article and one less expensive which will meet their needs to the extent of 90 per cent. The one-and-a-half inch mesh will meet their needs to the extent of 90 per cent., whereas the one-and-a-quarter inch mesh would be entirely satisfactory, but if we purchase the latter out of the Commonwealth advance, then there will be 20 per cent. less wire netting available for the farmers.

Mr. Ferguson: As much as that?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. With regard to the remarks of the member for Sussex (Mr. Brockman) on the Nannup settlement, he said that that settlement was started soundly and on good lines, but that there had been some departure from the scheme. If so, I know nothing of it. There has been no Ministerial instruction that the lines on which the Nannup settlement proceeded were to be departed from.

Mr. Brockman: So far as the improvements are concerned, they seem to be at a standstill.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I decline to make any departure from the instructions given till I am able to see the settlement for myself.

Mr. Brockman: There has been no progress during the last six or seven months.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: What is the cause of that? That is a serious statement to make. We are paying these men, and they are doing the same work that they set out upon; yet the hon. member says there is no progress. I am surprised to hear that. What are they being paid for if there is no progress? That is what occurs to me. I shall go to Nannup and look into the matter for myself. There has been no Ministerial instruction that the order in which the improvements shall be effected is to be departed from. The hon. member stated that there were good pastures on the abandoned areas at Busselton. If there are not good pastures on them at this time of the year, there never will be. This is the period of the year when there ought to be good pastures. I want the House to understand that

a limited acreage of good pasture does not represent a farm. It simply means a certain acreage, no more, no less. What these farmers require is sufficient acreage to keep themselves and their families. If group settlers in the South-West, with 60, 70, and even 100 acres, cannot make a living, how can these men make a living on land which has been condemned by the Group Settlement Board and by gentlemen who have lived all their lives on adjacent country? With regard to the Margaret River settlement, I have heard some reports about the country there. I understand it is very poor country indeed and it is my intention to inspect it. I think I can assure the House, however, that the men engaged there will be employed somewhere else. They will be employed developing better class country. The Agricultural Bank have a lot of property which can be converted into standard farms and so be an asset to the country. In regard to the hon. member's remarks with respect to group settlements, neither the Imperial nor the Commonwealth Government will have anything further to do with them. I have told the House before that both Governments are pressing for the cancellation of the migration agreements.

The Premier: They are insisting on it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Government are resisting that, as the Leader of the Opposition knows. He would not agree to the cancellation of the agreement.

Mr. Latham: No. I would not let them off one iota.

The Premier: I had great difficulty in resisting it at the last conference, though.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: As the member for Sussex said, the State Government bears all the loss in connection with the group settlements. It was mentioned that a lady had been to this State to make inquiries for English capitalists who were desirous of investing millions of money in land settlement. I know of nothing about that, but I do know that the Imperial Government have not made any application to the Western Australian Government to spend their money here. If these capitalists are prepared to spend their own money here, then I think I can say that my colleagues will agree with me that we would be glad to have them.

Mr. Latham: The whole House would back you. We can supply the land if they find the money.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If the Imperial Government would come forward with a proposition to develop the country and take the whole of the responsibility, we would give them a hearty welcome. In fact, we would not let them out of our sight.

Mr. Ferguson: I suggest you take a trip to the Old Country and make them the offer.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I would like to do so. That might be a good idea. However, while immigration was proceeding, this State had an agency in Great Britain. We have taken over the group settlements and shouldered all the responsibility. We are carrying the debt and paying the interest on the money which was advanced. The British Government made a wonderful deal with Western Australia. We took from the Old Country large numbers of people whom the British Government would have had to keep, while at the same time we are paying the British investor interest on the millions of pounds borrowed for the purpose of establishing those migrants in the State, and we are very patient when people come and tell us how badly we have treated them. I really do not know whether I can reply to the member for Nelson. I do not know that I should give much attention to what he says.

Mr. J. H. Smith: I want you to.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member made one of his usual wild and woolly speeches. It was disconnected and contradictory.

Mr. J. H. Smith: There is a lot of truth in it. You admit that from your own remarks.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It was like a willy-willy, which gathers in its course all kinds of unconsidered trifles, such as kerosene tins and other articles, and dumps them in many places. The hon. member said the country had gone to pieces. Yet he spoke about the necessity for building railways and opening up new country. He said none of the settlers were making a living, that they were down and out, and yet he wants 2,500 more settlers.

Mr. Ferguson: The land would carry so many sheep to the acre!

Mr. J. H. Smith: I can vouch for that. There is no treacle on that, either.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He said the group settlers were unable to carry on,

and then he wanted to settle another 2,500 people.

Mr. J. H. Smith: They would select the land for themselves if you built the railway.

Mr. Patrick: They don't want a railway to shift their sheep.

Mr. J. H. Smith: We can guarantee the rainfall.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member must not make these irresponsible statements with his tongue in his cheek.

Mr. J. H. Smith: There is nothing irresponsible about my statements.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They may appear all right in the papers in the South-West. If the hon. member makes such irresponsible statements, we can only attach to them the value they deserve.

Mr. J. H. Smith: I said that at present prices the settlers cannot pay their interest.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member said that settlers were down and out. What responsible body of men would spend a penny to encourage settlement when the other settlers were down and out?

Mr. J. H. Smith: You know I did not say they were all down and out.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I leave it to the House.

Mr. J. H. Smith: You know the class of settler down there.

The CHAIRMAN: Order.

Mr. J. H. Smith: You know I did not say they were all down and out. They are not all like many of your wheat farmers.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I leave it entirely to the House.

Mr. J. H. Smith: I did not say they were all down and out.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member must have some sort of responsibility.

Mr. J. H. Smith: I have just as much responsibility as you have.

The CHAIRMAN: I must ask the hon. member to keep order.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member said I am not optimistic about the industry. I am here to do as good a job as I can for these people. I will do all I possibly can for them. The Government will do all they can for the industries of the State. Whilst we regard the position as very grave at present, we are carrying on and seeking to help these industries in the hope and expectation that they will all

come right, whether sheep, wool, or wheat. and I am sure the Government are being supported by the House in that determination.

Vote put and passed.

*Votes—Town Planning, £901; Farmers' Debts Adjustment, £2,550; Group Settlement, £5—agreed to.*

Department of the Minister for Agriculture (Hon. H. Millington, Minister).

*Vote—Agriculture, £61,635:*

**THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE** (Hon. H. Millington—Mt. Hawthorn), [9.15]: Members have had the pleasure of listening to the Minister for Mines introduce his Estimates in a spirit of real optimism. The Minister for Lands has dealt with his Estimates, but I am afraid that anyone who could be optimistic about land settlement in these days must be a real optimist. In the history of the State, the Mines Department has played its part, and then came the turn of the Lands Department. Land settlement was a big question and with the decline of mining operations over a period, naturally attention was turned to the land. Now it appears that land settlement has slowed down considerably, and the Department of Agriculture rises to greater importance than was generally attributed to it in the boom days of land settlement. In these days, the problem is not so much one of settling people on the land as of keeping them there. That constitutes the great difficulty, and therefore the activities of the Department of Agriculture, not usually regarded as of paramount importance, are now assuming a new standard in the minds of the public. Farmers and stockraisers are continually asking the department for assistance in their problems. Last year the area under wheat was 3,387,940 acres, from which 41,655,000 bushels of wheat were produced. This year the area under crop totals 3,178,468 acres, and it would appear, owing to the favourable winding up of the season, which did not open up promisingly, that there are prospects of a return of between 35,000,000 and 36,000,000 bushels of wheat. Considering that we are over 200,000 acres short of the area under crop for the previous season, the prospective crop returns

are highly satisfactory. One of the methods by which the Department of Agriculture has been of definite assistance to the settlers has been the system of State farms. Those farms have been established for experimental purposes and have not been laid out on the best land in the districts where they are located, but on what would be regarded as typical land in the several localities. The farm at Merredin has had a great influence on wheat-growing in Western Australia and it has been found necessary, in addition to the ordinary experimental work there, to establish district farms as well. During recent years we have established district farms that are of great importance to the localities concerned. I would instance one specially, the Ghooli State Farm on the eastern fringe of the agricultural belt. That farm has already justified its existence. Had it not been for that farm, it is quite possible that the district itself would have been discredited. The methods adopted on the Ghooli farm have proved successful in showing what can be grown in that part of the State. Wheat-breeding, and the cultivation of drought and rust-resisting wheat have been matters of great importance to the State. On that farm, experimental work has been undertaken that could not have been successfully carried out on other farms. The same applies to the State farm at Dampawah, 30 miles to the east and practically in a pastoral district. That farm is representative of the north-eastern section of the wheat belt, and the results attained there have been simply astonishing. The land had such a reputation that it was not considered possible to grow wheat there at all. Yet, the information gained on that experimental farm with regard to cultivation methods and the selection of varieties of wheat suitable for the drier areas, together with investigations regarding the time of seeding and so forth, rendered it possible to make wheat-growing profitable on the State farm at Dampawah. In fact, the average last year at that farm was better than at any other State farm.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Is wheat-growing profitable on that farm to-day?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: From the standpoint of the average yield, not having regard to present prices, the results achieved at the Dampawah farm were not equalled by any other farm.

Mr. J. H. Smith: But you said wheat-growing there was profitable.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It would be, given reasonable prices.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Yes, with wheat at 5s. a bushel.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Wheat can be grown there for considerably less than that. Last year the crop at Dampawah averaged 16 or 18 bushels—I have not the exact figures—whereas the average for the State was 12 bushels.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Was that profitable at present-day prices?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not know what the hon. member means by "profitable."

Mr. J. H. Smith: You used the word.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I should say that, having regard to the wheat production generally throughout the State and the average yields, if wheat-growing were profitable anywhere, it would be at Dampawah.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Now you are qualifying your statement.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The same thing applies to apples. When we speak of profitable crops, that does not always refer to quantity, because I think prices have something to do with it.

Mr. J. H. Smith: But you said wheat-growing was profitable at Dampawah.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Let me inform the hon. member—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The Minister will address the Chair.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If the hon. member is anxious to know, wheat was profitably grown there. On the various experimental farms, 1,706 acres have been cultivated, and the average yield has been 15 bushels 24 lbs. per acre, the State average, as I have already indicated, being 12 bushels to the acre. Sometimes a question is raised as to why we continue growing bulk crops. The answer to that is quite simple; it is because we require the crops to keep the staff and plant available for experimental work. With the exception of the farms at Wongan Hills and Merredin, the experimental farms are one-man concerns, operated with one team. Since it is necessary to conduct experimental work, it follows that bulk crops have to be grown. Those crops are grown from pedigreed seed. The demand for that type of seed has been

greater than the supply, with the exception of in the Esperance district. As a result, we have had to limit the quantity of pedigreed seed wheat available to farmers, but that wheat, when distributed from the experimental farms, has had a distinct bearing on the yields throughout the State.

Mr. Stubbs: You cannot place too great a value on it.

**THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:**  
The best farmers secure their supplies of pedigreed seed wheat, and from them produce their next season's crops. To indicate how rapidly that type of wheat will multiply, I was speaking to a leading farmer in the Merredin district, one of the Teasdale brothers, who said that from one bag of pedigreed seed wheat he had grown 200 bushels. I wondered how that was possible, and he explained that he had spread the seed from that bag over 700 acres. That meant that the wheat had multiplied seventy-fold in one year. It will be seen that although a limited quantity is available to the individual farmer, if the seeding is systematically worked out, the whole of our crops could be grown from pedigreed seed wheat, particularly if the farmers took advantage of the particular type of seed they required. One advantage is that they can secure grain that is acclimatised. Then again, in each district a particular type of wheat is specially favoured. In almost every district it is found that one wheat proves more profitable than another. Thus a variety despised in one district gives wonderful results in another. For instance, we never hear the Director of Agriculture mention one type of wheat, but it has proved a great success. The "Sutton" is not a success at Merredin but a wonderful success at Wongan Hills. Last year, even on poor soil, the "Sutton" averaged 26 bushels to the acre over an area of upwards of 30 acres, although the average for the Wongan Hills farm was 17 bushels. In each district the wheat required by the farmers is grown, and when the farmers demand a certain variety, they expect the State farms to provide the strain. It is equally important that the various varieties should be kept pure. That holds good also in respect to oats, and one of the most pleasing features regarding the Dampawah farm is the wonderful crop of oats that is grown there annually. The same thing applies at Salmon Gums, but if that area is to make good, I am convinced

it will be by means of mixed farming. On all the State farms, good crops can be grown, even on the poorer types of soil. In pursuing experiments in the mixed farming areas, it is essential that attention be given to the growing of fodder crops on the State farms. Another point about seed wheat supplies is that a system of exchange has been arranged by which for every two bushels of seed wheat delivered at the siding for a farmer, he has to deliver to the Pool three bushels. Over 1,000 farmers have been supplied with seed wheat on that basis. I mention that because it has been assumed that the State farms, to a great extent, have worked out their usefulness from the wheat breeding standpoint, particularly in view of the experiments conducted at Merredin and more recently at Wongan Hills, but that work has disclosed the distinct need for experiments regarding various varieties of wheats. We have enormous areas and a variety of soils, but unfortunately in some instances the rainfall is not always reliable. Therefore there is the continuous need in a grain country to keep up to date with our seed wheat. So in every instance it will be necessary to continue the experimental work on the State farm and also with pedigree seed wheat.

Mr. Griffiths: Those farms are worth their cost for the seed wheat alone.

**THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:**  
Yes. No fancy prices are put on this seed wheat: it is supplied at cost and its value to the farming community is immense. During recent years a new wheat, Totadgin, was distributed amongst the farmers for the first time. No attempt is made to boom any particular variety, and the farmers have the right to select what variety they choose. The M. T. Padbury cropping competition trophy was won last year by Mr. O. G. Butcher, of Pithara, who obtained 2 bushels 42 lbs. per inch of rainfall over 609 acres. This competition has extended over ten years. In the 50-acre crop competition conducted by the Royal Agricultural Society last year there were 168 entries, a record, and a new official State record was established by Mr. F. S. Freebairn, of Jilakin, whose competing area of 50 acres was calculated to yield 47 bushels per acre. The previous record of 46 bushels was held by Mr. C. E. Cochran, of Pallinup. Another important work undertaken by the Agricul-

tural Department in conjunction with a committee of stud breeders, was that of assisting to establish—and it has been established—the export fat lamb industry. Experiments were made at the Avondale State farm, and it was indicated that the lamb most suitable for export is the progeny of a long wool merino half-bred ewe mated with a South Down ram. The shipments of this breed have already established a reputation in the Old Country. The department can take some credit for this, and we appreciate very much the assistance rendered by the stud breeders in producing this fine type. In very few years we have established a record in price equal to that of any of the other States and practically equal to New Zealand. And the Swan-down brand which is put on the export lamb has established an entirely satisfactory reputation in the Old Country; so, having regard to the brief period over which this industry has been established, it is very creditable to those responsible, and I believe will be of very great value to the State, particularly now when people are disposed to go in for sheep. And since this is a concentrated form of food, and one for which there is a sale, provided the quality is there, the great thing was to establish a name for W.A. fat lambs. It was systematically done by the department in conjunction with a committee from outside. It is most creditable to Western Australia, and there is every prospect of the industry extending.

Mr. Griffiths: Did not the price equal that of Canterbury lambs?

**THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** I believe it did. The reports that come back from the Old Country have been most encouraging, and we have been told to proceed on the lines adopted. There have been all the differences of opinion, and the arguments which are always associated with the beginning of an industry involving stock breeding, so it is just as well that we have fixed the type, for it is generally recognised that it is the right type. Up to the 31st October, 33,000 lambs were killed for export, and last year 10,000 were exported. In addition to the advancement made with the export lambs there has been an appreciable increase in the price of wool. So in looking for something to give a measure of comfort to our stock-raisers, those two features are found to be most pleasing. Now

let me mention the advance made in the butter industry. In 1930-31 the butter manufactured amounted to 8,666,399 lbs. In 1932-33 the quantity was 11,261,102 lbs. Since we consume roughly 10,000,000 lbs. per annum, this means that we have not only overtaken our own requirements but there is now a surplus for export. Although a certain quantity is still imported, the fact remains that we have now overtaken the needs of our State, and have 1,250,000 lbs. for export. Under the Dairy Cattle Improvement Act the percentage of bulls has risen from 23 per cent. in 1924 to 58 per cent. in 1932. That is largely because of the Act. And the average milk production has risen from 217 gallons in 1924, to 342 gallons last year, or an increase of 125 gallons or 57 per cent. Since it is essential that the butter industry must be established, such an advance as that is of the utmost significance. Recently when a deputation came to me with some grievance about the conditions in the South-West, one man pointed out that what they wanted to do was to save the farmer who had 30 cows producing 100 lbs. of butter fat per annum. I said I did not want to save that man, that the man who thinks he can get a living out of 30 cows averaging 100 lbs. of butter fat, ought to recognise that that sort of dairying would never get us out of our difficulties. With all the talk we hear about restricted output, it is through the work of the Agricultural Department to improve the breed of cows and the quantity and quality of milk and butter fat, that we shall be able to establish the dairying industry on a firm basis. Only in that way can it be done. So it is not the number of cows, but whether those cows are improving in their productivity. To an extent this can be achieved by breeding, and also by feeding. The improvement, not only of the dairy herd, but also of the pastures is essential if we are to progress. There is a disposition to assume that those who are not progressing are to be kept on the land and to be given all imaginable concessions. At another recent deputation I heard a man described in these words, "He is not too good a farmer, but he has a very shrewd head." If the dairying industry is to be established it will have to be by legitimate improvements made by the dairy farmer, and not by any display of shrewdness and business acumen.

on the part of another who is "not too good a farmer." We have now operating in this State 16 manufactories, four cream depots, two condensed milk factories, and one cheese factory. It is encouraging that we have at last established a cheese factory. We have for long viewed with disgust the quantity of cheese being imported into Western Australia.

Mr. Ferguson: Is that factory working full time?

Mr. McLarty: Very full at present.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I understand there is quite a demand for the product, and that the factory is increasing its output. So long as it can produce the quality there will be no doubt about the future.

Mr. McLarty: The quality has been highly praised.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I believe there is a general desire to give preference to our own products. Of course the people are not going to buy second rate goods; if we can produce the quality, our people will be prepared to pay even a little more for the Western Australian product. Now that this factory is winning a reputation for producing a first-class cheese, there will be no doubt about the industry extending. Again, we have had large quantities of condensed milk imported in recent years, but we now have two condensed milk factories.

Mr. Thorn: Can the cheese factory put out the supply?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No doubt Western Australia can supply herself with cheese. The first thing to be done is to establish a reputation for the product. The cheese must be of good quality, in which event it is only a question of time before we supply our own requirements. The most encouraging feature is that we can produce the quality, just as we can with dried fruits.

Mr. Griffiths: We imported £91,000 worth of cheese last year so there is plenty of scope for local manufacture.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The importation of bacon and pork has been reduced from 2,176,856 lbs. in 1931 to 1,278,601 lbs. in 1932. Now that we have established the dairying industry and in a country that produces wheat as we can, it is ridiculous to import our requirements of

bacon and pork from the Eastern States. We need more than a campaign to induce people to use Western Australia products. We also need a campaign to stimulate production and above all things to produce commodities of high quality.

Mr. Thorn: We need a little loyalty.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:

Yes. The policy of the department regarding the pig-breeding industry has been justified, and I think it can fairly be claimed that the breeds recommended are the right ones. There is an advantage in having uniformity and in reducing the number of breeds and in fixing the type required. That has been done by the department, and although nothing is said against those growers who choose other breeds, there is undoubtedly an advantage in having an established breed for a district. We have established grade herd testing in co-operation with the Commonwealth. Eight units have already been organised, located as follows:—Donnybrook 517 cows, Serpentine 470, Cookernup 425, Harvey 396, Brunswick 559, Dardanup 405, Balingup 396 and Capel 520. I think that herd-testing has been the greatest stimulus to improved breeding of stock. Nothing brings home herd weaknesses so pointedly as does herd-testing. By those means the farmer can weed out the unprofitable cows, eliminate all chance and improve his herd to the extent of keeping only those cows that are profitable. Herd-testing has certainly had a beneficial effect in the districts named, and there is a demand for its extension. It will have to be extended if we are to bring our herds up to standard. During the year the crop of all kinds of fruit was good. To the end of June, 1933, 600,777 cases of fruit were shipped, the total including 504,052 cases of apples, 46,986 cases of pears and 44,685 cases of grapes. In addition, 1,090 cases of currants were sent abroad. Diseases associated with orchards have to an extent been eliminated, and Western Australia is the one State free from codlin moth. Apple scab, which was found in orchards three years ago, has been entirely eradicated. In the North-West bananas and pineapples are being grown in commercial quantities in the Carnarvon district. Over 40,000 banana plants are growing in the district, and it is expected that the time is not far distant when we shall be able to supply our own requirements. A few years ago an agricul-

tural conference petitioned the Federal Government to grant a rebate of duty on bananas imported into Western Australia because of the need for that fruit in the districts of the North. That request was refused. Now we have overcome the difficulty since we shall be able soon to grow sufficient for our own requirements. That is better than getting a rebate of Customs duty on the imported fruit. The samples sent to Perth have been most encouraging. Although it is not expected that this industry will become a very big one, certainly it will be satisfactory to be able to supply our own needs. Previous to 1930 approximately £40,000 was sent out of the State annually for the purchase of potatoes. Now we are in a position to produce, not only sufficient for home consumption, but also at times to export supplies to the Eastern States, and successful shipments have been made to Colombo and Singapore. Last year the average yield was 4.14 tons per acre, which was the highest of any State in the Commonwealth. Hence it seems that in the various departments of production we are certainly making headway, not as fast as we should like to do, but still substantial headway towards making up lost ground. Recently a representative meeting was held at Northam to deal with the question of toxic paralysis in stock. There is no doubt of the prevalence of the disease in that and other districts. With officers of the department, I journeyed to Northam and we met the farmers, and as a result it was decided to petition the Commonwealth Government for better terms for providing wire netting. Wherever I go I find the impression general that it is impossible, in districts where rabbits are present, to farm profitably unless the holdings are netted. The next point dealt with was that of toxic paralysis. The officers of the department advise that the disease is due to an insufficiency of food during the dry months. Only recently Mr. W. G. Burges of York, one of the best flock breeders, a man who knows as much about the feeding of stock as does any man in Australia, expressed the opinion that lucerne flea and red mite were to a degree responsible for toxic paralysis on account of the ravages wrought by those pests amongst the clovers and pastures. He said that, as a result of the two pests, his output had fallen almost 50 per cent. in the last 10 years. This gives an idea of the problem that confronts us.

It seems that Mr. Burges is growing just as much feed for the pests as for his stock. One of the disabilities we suffer in Western Australia is that we have a long dry period when there is not sufficient nutriment in the dry feed to satisfy the stock, and then it is that the beasts get a craving for bone chewing, which is responsible for the disease. The Treasurer has made available sufficient money to start a small field laboratory at Meekering, where it is proposed to produce the disease and, by certain feeding tests, endeavour to discover how to obviate the depraved taste for bone chewing. A certain quantity of concentrates will be necessary and an improved stock lick will have to be supplied to make up the deficiency in the fodder. This is a highly important matter, especially when we remember that in a district where 70,000 sheep were depastured, 17,000 succumbed to toxic paralysis. Such a calamity demands that the Department of Agriculture should take action and endeavour to assist the farmers to minimise the disaster that has overtaken them. The question of the removal of certain stock from the North-West has been the subject of keen debate for some years. The North-West is subject to sufficient disabilities to warrant the Government doing their utmost to ensure that the settlers get a fair deal. The question of importance is that of removing certain stock from the Anna Plains station, which stock, because of the tick, cannot be shipped, and because of the pleuro restrictions cannot, it has been thought, safely be brought south. While I was in the Eastern States the director and I made inquiries, and now it is considered there is a prospect of applying Dr. Turner's test to the stock to determine whether any of the cattle are carriers. One idea was that if cattle were affected with pleuro-pneumonia, a long arduous journey would enable the affected ones to be discovered, but the veterinary officers say that is not so, but that it would be possible for the carriers to stand the journey without being detected. The test, it is considered, will be reasonably safe, but after the cattle have been shifted, provision will have to be made to subject them to a degree of quarantine restrictions. It would be an easy matter for the Government to sit tight and say that the stock must not be removed.

Mr. Ferguson: Is the test 100 per cent perfect?



**The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** No, that is the point. We hope in the near future to learn just how reliable the test is. At present it cannot be guaranteed 100 per cent. perfect, but the veterinary and pathological officers are taking up the question and there appears to be a prospect of being able to remove the stock. It does not follow that the stock would be brought willy-nilly into the South-West. There would have to be some control after shipment, but as there are 12,000 head of stock on that station, in common fairness and justice an endeavour must be made to get the cattle moved if that can be done safely and without undue risk to other herds. I have been to the Midland district and no objection would be raised to the stock going there, but a decided objection is offered to such stock going to the South-West.

**Mr. Ferguson:** You might have found that one or two that particularly want the cattle had no objection, but the majority would object.

**The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** I do not think there would be any need to bring the cattle down that far. There are stations in the Wiluna district where such stock could be held. That would not be a matter for me to decide. It would depend on whether the Chief Veterinary Officer was satisfied that the stock could be safely removed, and that the test was sufficiently reliable. I believe we are reaching the stage when the test can practically be guaranteed as sufficiently reliable. If so, to that extent we shall be able to assist the North-West stock producers. Unless ways and means can be devised for bringing down steers and fattening them, there is likely to be a deficiency of beef. An attempt will have to be made to overcome some of the difficulties and disabilities from which the North-West growers are suffering. During the past year the expenditure from the fund collected under the Vermin Act was £23,955. Those are the collections since the rate was reduced by half. During the period the bonuses for dogs and foxes were twice increased, £2 now being paid for dog scalps, 10s. for foxes, 2s. for cub foxes and 2s. 6d. for eagles. The total number of dog scalps paid for last year was 10,407, foxes 17,376 and in the case of eagles 4,174. Foxes are prolific breeders.

**Mr. Mann:** Is it certain that they are all Western Australian dogs?

**The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** We cannot have a system that is entirely rogue-proof, but every care is taken to ascertain that the dogs are of local origin. Notwithstanding all the money that was spent, there still seem to be many dogs at large. Foxes that were almost unknown a few years ago were caught to the extent of 17,000 last year.

**Mr. Mann:** Where are most of the dog scalps coming from?

**The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** They seem to be coming from everywhere.

**Mr. Mann:** They have been cleaned out south of Geraldton.

**Mr. Latham:** Many are coming from east of Leonora.

**The Premier:** And out Wiluna way there are large numbers of them.

**The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** The officers of the department say a good deal of the difficulty is due to tame dogs having gone wild. Insufficient supervision is exercised by the local vermin boards. It is not sufficient merely to pay rates, and employ a few trappers.

**Mr. Latham:** It is surprising how people allow themselves to be taken in.

**The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** The business is not a very satisfactory one. Pastoralists and farmers have paid the tax for several years. We check the pest, but we do not seem to have solved the problem. Our people have to go on paying unless some better means can be devised to destroy these animals. Reference has been made to the soil surveys conducted by Dr. Teakle. His activities are in the main directed by the Lands Department and the Agricultural Bank. There is a disposition to misinterpret his reports. Many people have not a proper conception of what soil analysis means. When in the Salmon Gums district I had an opportunity to visit Dr. Teakle's field laboratory. There can be no question as to the advantage he has conferred upon the district by his soil surveys up to date. It is not a question of his condemning the land but of his re-classifying it and showing its actual value. In the Esperance district some of those lands which an experienced farmer would have cleared first have turned out to be unprofitable for wheat

growing. One wondered how it was that Esperance was such a failure.

Mr. Latham: That was known in 1917 when Prof. Paterson reported upon it.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:

Far from ruining a man Dr. Teakle can now give him the advice he wants. His analyses are borne out by the State Experimental Farm where all these varieties of soil are to be found. On one property we get an average of 18 bushels, but on heavier land the crop is indifferent, and it will not pay to take it off. In such cases one can only say that those areas can never again be used for wheat growing. I listened carefully to my colleague. There is a suggestion that Dr. Teakle merely condemns land. He does not condemn it. He says that it is not suitable for wheat growing, and then proceeds to advise the farmers to grow fodder crops, etc. Wimmera, rye and oats are now being produced in these areas. Even this year when the rainfall was barely six inches in the growing period the oat crops are fair on the coast and on the heavier land, and the rye grass shows an encouraging growth. It is first of all a question of classifying a man's farm. The owner can then judge for himself that it is not profitable to grow wheat and he turns his attention to other things. The Esperance lands have not been condemned. Dr. Teakle is more likely to prove their salvation than anything else. As he points out, there is no sand plain in that district such as is found in other districts. There is a type of soil that is useless for wheat-growing. The right thing to do is to tell the farmers so. Some years ago we spent a large sum of money endeavouring to teach the farmers proper cultivation methods in the Esperance district. We advanced 10s. per acre for fallowing land which had never been cultivated there before. We lost money. We were told that that happened years before there was any classification. Dr. Teakle has been responsible for the classification. If it is suggested that his work should be confined to the Esperance district, then I say he has given the Esperance farmer sufficient information to enable him to carry on. The work done by Dr. Teakle has to be understood. Very often we find people putting a construction upon his reports that was neither intended nor justified. For instance, he did not condemn the whole of

the 3,500 farms scheme. If one read his report and analysed it, one would find that a large proportion of the good land has not been condemned; and, in any case, if the land is salt, that is not Dr. Teakle's fault, although some people seem to think that wherever he goes there is a trail of salt. But there is not only Dr. Teakle's technical report; our experimental farm positively and absolutely bears out what he says. I know people are not satisfied merely with a technical or scientific report on land, and quite right; but in addition, the land has been tested out. As far as the Esperance district is concerned, Dr. Teakle's work will go far towards its salvation. He has made it possible to keep in the district the people already settled there. I am not suggesting an extension of the settlement. I do not think anyone would elect to go to the Salmon Gums district, but I do say that those who are there now should stay there. They have the railway and we are about to proceed to extend the jetty; there is an adequate water supply, as well as good roads. In view of the large amount of money spent upon the development of the district, it should be our business to assist to keep in the district the farmers already settled there. I should say that ought to be our policy, and Dr. Teakle's work will be a very important factor in keeping the farmers there.

Mr. Latham: The Lands Department have been paying Dr. Teakle all the time.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:

It costs 2d. to 3d. an acre to classify land in this way. That is a saner proposition than clearing the land, fencing it, and cultivating it for several years before discovering it to be useless. Personally, I should prefer to have the report in the first place and so save that disastrous expenditure. I think Dr. Teakle's method is certainly sane, and once people understood the true import of his work, they will take advantage of it. There need be no prejudice. He merely states what he has definitely proved by investigation.

Mr. Latham: You might injure him by protesting too much.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I think his work is now being appreciated by the Lands Department, the Agricultural Department and by the farmers themselves. The member for Kanowna (Mr. Nulsen) said that he was very suspicious and very

prejudiced, but he has to admit now that he has changed his views completely as a result of his experience of the actual work done in that district. I do not think I need detain the House much longer, but I have mentioned some of the activities of the department on account of their importance, and also so that members may know the problems we are called upon to deal with. The agriculturist has to deal not only with production problems, but problems associated with stock diseases, plant diseases, and stock and insect pests, in addition to low prices for his products. There seems to be an aggregation of difficulties as far as the agriculturist is concerned. Naturally, in times such as the present he looks first to his financier, but he has also to look to the agricultural adviser. I believe the work of the department is increasing in importance and that as the difficulties increase, instead of there being less need for the technical adviser, there is greater need. I believe, too, that a better understanding exists between the agriculturist and the expert. There is a disposition now to take advantage of such aid as the scientist can give.

Progress reported.

*House adjourned at 10.17 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Wednesday, 8th November, 1933.*

Question: Trolley buses, costs and revenue	1727
Bills: Entertainments Tax Act Amendment, 3R., passed	1727
Metropolitan Whole Milk Act Amendment, report	1727
Geraldton Sailors and Soldiers' Memorial Institute Lands Vesting, 2R.	1727
Lotteries (Control) Act Amendment, 2R.	1728
Resolution: State Forest, to revoke dedication	1751

### QUESTION—TROLLEY BUSES, COSTS AND REVENUE.

Hon. H. SEDDON asked the Chief Secretary: 1, What was the cost per mile of equipping the route now served by the trolley 'buses? 2, What has been the running cost per mile since the inception of the service? 3, What has been the total revenue during the same replied?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, £2,130 per mile for double overhead line. 2, Operating costs, 15d. per mile. 3, £595.

### BILL—ENTERTAINMENTS TAX ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and *passed*.

### BILL—METROPOLITAN WHOLE MILK ACT AMENDMENT.

Further report of Committee adopted.

### BILL — GERALDTON SAILORS AND SOLDIERS' MEMORIAL INSTITUTE LANDS VESTING.

*Second Reading.*

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [4.37] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of the Bill is to vest certain lands in the trustees of the Geraldton Sailors and Soldiers' Memorial Institute. During the later years of the Great War, an incorporated body known as the Geraldton Sailors and Soldiers' Memorial Institute was formed in Geraldton. A considerable sum of money was raised and a large building was purchased for use as a soldiers' institute. A land-owner at Geraldton donated sixteen blocks of land to the institute as a free gift, with the object of enabling money to be raised to assist in paying off the debt of the building that had been purchased. An Act of Parliament was subsequently passed dissolving the incorporated body and vesting the various assets in the trustees of the Geraldton Sailors and Soldiers' Memorial Institute. The land in question was not included with the other assets, and consequently, in a strictly legal sense, it became the property of the Crown, as the incorporated body had been dissolved, and the land was left without an owner. The trustees of the present institute are desir-

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