

# Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 11th December, 1918.

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

[For "Questions on Notice" and "Papers Presented" see "Minutes of Proceedings."]

## PERSONAL EXPLANATION—INCORRECT DIVISION LIST.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES (North) [4.36]: If I be in order, I wish to refer to the "Minutes of Proceedings" of Thursday of last week. In a division list my name is given with both the "ayes" and the "noes." Only a week or two ago I pointed out a similar error, my name being confounded with that of Mr. Mills. On page 96 of the "Minutes" I find this has been done again.

The PRESIDENT: I hope the Clerks will take notice and exercise more care. I do not see how the mistake can arise so often. The one hon. member is named Mills, and the other Miles, yet continually these mistakes are being made. I suppose they are what would be called clerical mistakes.

## QUESTION OF ORDER.

The PRESIDENT [4.38]: I must ask hon. members to keep in their places. This habit of wandering from one place to another seems to grow upon us towards the end of each session.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES (North) [4.39]: Surely, Sir, it is permitted that a member may pass from one place to another in the discharge of the business of the House?

The PRESIDENT [4.40]: If there is no business actually before the House at the time, it is permitted, but if hon. members were to sit here, as I do, and see the continual passage of members from one place to another, it would appear to them undesirable. All that is required is to ring for a messenger, yet some hon. members are continually passing about.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I merely ask on a question of procedure. I wish presently to discuss the Vermin Bill with another hon. member.

The PRESIDENT: I think the better course would be to see the other hon. member outside. At all events, I should consider it a favour if hon. members would adopt that course, because there is so very much of this crossing from place to place.

## BILL—DISCHARGED SOLDIERS' SETTLEMENT.

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [4.40] in moving the second reading said: I regret very much that the Bill, which is I think beyond comparison

the most important of the session, should make its appearance in this House at so late a stage.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Especially as there is no reason whatever for the delay.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I can only hope that members in this House, in addition to perusing the Bill since it was submitted to them, have taken advantage of such opportunity as they may have had of familiarising themselves with its provisions whilst it was still before another place. I have not the slightest doubt that members will deal with the object of the Bill most sympathetically; as they will recognise the great necessity for the measure. For my part I can assure them that any amendment which may be suggested for the purpose of improving the Bill in making more effective the desire of the Government and Parliament and the people of the State to do all that can be done for the returned soldiers—any such amendment will be most sympathetically considered. In introducing the Bill I do not propose to enlarge upon the duty of the State to the returned soldiers. I shall satisfy myself by simply contending that that duty can never be fully discharged. Whatever the State does, the people will still remain the debtors of the soldiers. My present purpose is to outline to the House the provisions of the Bill as they embody the proposals of the Government in regard to the settlement of returned soldiers upon the land. But before doing this, I think I will not be out of place if I say a few words regarding the provisions to be made for returned soldiers generally. The fact that the Commonwealth Government have assumed responsibility for repatriation apart from land settlement does not absolve the Government or the people of Western Australia from responsibility, even regarding those soldiers who do not intend to settle upon the land. I do not propose to discuss in this connection the very vexed question of Commonwealth and State powers, but merely to establish the position that these men are not only returned soldiers but are also citizens of Western Australia; and sentiments of gratitude and of self-interest alike should prompt the Government, the Parliament, and the people to do all that may be necessary to see that those men are satisfactorily absorbed in the civil life of the community. It is essential, I think, that we remember this outstanding fact: the successful repatriation of the returned soldier depends upon providing him with suitable and remunerative employment. This the Commonwealth Government do not undertake to do. The Commonwealth Government, through their repatriation boards and committees, seek for positions for the men. The Commonwealth Government provide them with sustenance whilst they are seeking employment, and provide also the cost of training in new avocations men who, because of inquiry or illness, are unable to follow their old occupations. I believe that in these respects the State Board of Repatriation have done very good work under somewhat disadvantageous circumstances. For instance, this is the only State of the Commonwealth which

has not been visited by the Minister for Repatriation. On several occasions Senator Milson has made all arrangements to come to Western Australia, but in each case—sometimes at the very last moment—he has found it necessary to postpone his visit. I am aware that not a few matters of great importance to the returned soldier have been unduly delayed because of these frequently promised and as frequently postponed visits of the Minister for Repatriation. The latest reply the Government have received, to a telegram sent by the Premier, on this point was that the Minister for Repatriation would be unable to visit Western Australia until the end of January. I sincerely hope that his visit will not be again delayed, and that his coming here will be the means of setting right certain matters in regard to repatriation for which the Commonwealth Government have assumed responsibility and which at the present time are not quite as they ought to be. I have referred to the fact that the Federal Government provide through their Repatriation Committee sustenance for men who are awaiting employment. That is entirely proper, and I think it may be taken as an indication of the determination of the Australian people to do a fair thing by the soldier. But, at the same time, we all know that sustenance is not what the soldier wants. He wants employment, suitable employment, and employment as quickly as he can possibly obtain it. We must remember the fact that when the soldiers went away undertakings were given by Government and by many private employers that their positions would be retained for the soldiers until they came back. I think it is important to emphasise that that undertaking was absolute and unconditional. It must be fulfilled, not merely in the letter, but also in the spirit. Nor will it be sufficient for either Government or private employers merely to say, "We will extend preference to returned soldiers; we will give a position to a returned soldier as soon as one is available." That was not the condition on which the soldiers went away; and what all men who went away with that promise are entitled to expect is that directly they return positions will be available for them. Now we have to remember that in a great many cases other people have necessarily taken the position of the returned soldier. In a good many other cases, business has fallen off; or the industry may have fallen off so that the number of persons employed is very much smaller than it was before the war. If on the return of the soldier the employer—whether it be the Government or a private individual—says to these people who have been taken on in place of the soldier and to people whose work may be superfluous, "Now that the soldier has come back we have no longer any need for your services, because the soldier has come back to take your position," then they will be doing what is right as regards the soldier, and probably keeping faith with him, but it must not be forgotten that they will probably be occasioning a great deal of hardship to many members of the community. I am sure, again, that that is not exactly what the returned soldier wants or

what he is entitled to expect. What he wants is to step into employment without feeling that he is inflicting hardship upon anybody else. In other words, what he really wants is to return to a country where employment is abundant, where his energies and his abilities will have full scope, where he will not even be dependent upon the gratitude of the people—although he is entitled to that in full measure—but where he will be able to carve out a livelihood for himself largely in accordance with his own inclinations. Now, this is something that no scheme of repatriation carried out by the Federal Government can achieve, for the simple reason that, as I said at the outset, the Federal Government do not undertake to provide employment for the returned soldier. The question then arises, to what extent will the industries of the State immediately absorb the returned soldiers? I think the answer will depend very largely upon the courage and the enterprise of the Government, and of the people generally. It will be, I take it, for the Government and the large employers of labour to set the example. I do not desire to anticipate in any way the debate that is likely to arise in connection with the Appropriation Bill on matters of finance; but I will say that the Government recognise that the signing of the armistice and the prospect of immediate peace have entirely altered the situation. Prior to the beginning of November, the supreme necessity, so far as the Commonwealth and the States and the entire British Empire were concerned, was to find money wherewith to defeat the Germans. At that time we in the Commonwealth were called upon to provide for war purposes a sum equal to 30s. per month per head of the entire population of Australia. Had the war continued for another two or three years, we should have been compelled to continue to find that money, or to confess ourselves beaten—which we would never have done. And until the war had finished, if it had been two years or three years hence, we should have had to bear that expense. So that it may be fairly argued that by every month that the war has been shortened we in Australia have been saved this expenditure of 30s. per month per head of our entire community. The contention I want to put forward is that as a community we must be prepared to spend some portion of that money in providing for the proper repatriation of our soldiers. Only by Government effort and by private enterprise can we secure that, instead of sustenance allowance, relief works, unemployment, and discontent, we shall have such activity and development as will enable the returned soldier to be reabsorbed into the industrial life of the community without unnecessary hardship to anyone. The Government are not unmindful of the fact that their financial arrangements with the Commonwealth were made on a war basis. The extent to which it may be necessary for this Government and the Governments of the other States to approach the

Federal Government for a review of that financial arrangement, because of the entirely different set of conditions created by the signing of the armistice and the prospect of immediate peace, is a matter that is now receiving consideration. But it is well for us to remember that before the war we in Western Australia, and also in fact during the first two years of war, were spending loan money at the rate of three million pounds per annum. This has now been cut down to a quarter of that figure, and it will be for Parliament to consider to what extent it may be necessary to put in hand reproductive and necessary works—because I maintain that there are in this State awaiting the carrying out various reproductive and necessary works—to put in hand reproductive and necessary works having in view the necessity for absorbing the labour of the returned soldier. It will also devolve upon capital as represented by financial institutions and private individuals to display a spirit of enterprise in order that the period of demobilisation shall not be one of stagnation and unemployment. In this connection we have to consider, looking at it from the most selfish point of view, the population question. I do not know to what extent we may be able to attract immigrants when the time is past in which all shipping will be required for the return of troops to their own countries. But it certainly behoves us to make our country as attractive as we can for those people who may be inclined to come here; and we have also this position to face, that we do not want to lose any of our returned soldiers. We do not want any of our returned soldiers to leave this country in order to go to some other State whose war record certainly will not compare with our own, simply because employment is more abundant there than here. I have made these few remarks on the general question, because I think it is a matter on which we should endeavour to centralise public opinion. The period of repatriation should be looked upon as a period of opportunity for both the State and the individual; and on the extent to which we make use of our opportunities will depend our ability, or otherwise, to discharge our obligations to the returned soldier. Personally, I believe profoundly that the returned soldier will be helped only to a very limited extent by schemes whether of land settlement or otherwise. His immediate future well-being will depend upon the activity of our industries and the general prosperity of the community. When we remember the severe set back to which our industries have been subjected, we must be ready to face courageously the fact that their recovery in some instances may be slow, and we must be ready to agree that, even if as a community it costs us something, the period of demobilisation shall not be one of stagnation and of scarcity of employment. I come now to the aims and provisions of the Bill before the House. The question may be asked, why is it proposed to do so much more for the returned soldier who

intends to go on the land than for the returned soldier who desires to take up some other form of business or the returned soldier whose aim it is merely to resume the employment he followed before the war? I think a satisfactory answer is not difficult to find. In making exceptionally easy terms for the returned soldier who goes on the land the State is guided as much by considerations of self interest as by a sense of duty to the returned soldiers themselves. What Western Australia needs above everything else is land settlement and production, in order to make way for an increased population; and it may be safely said that every returned soldier who is satisfactorily settled on the land solves the problem of settling in some other walk of life a number of other returned soldiers.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Temporarily.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The existing land laws of Western Australia are more generous than those of any other State of the Commonwealth, and the financial assistance afforded to men settling on the land is on a more generous scale in Western Australia than elsewhere. But, notwithstanding this, it was felt that something more should be done as regards returned soldiers desirous of settling on the land. The provisions of this Bill make many special and valuable concessions to the returned soldier. In preparing the Bill the Government have been guided to some extent by the Acts already in force in New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia. It has, of course, been necessary to make many and substantial alterations in order to fit the measure more exactly to local conditions. The Bill applies to all discharged soldiers and sailors who enlisted in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and in every British Dominion. In this respect the measure is in conformity with the Commonwealth Repatriation Act. It is provided that the privileges conferred by the Bill shall extend to soldiers discharged prior to embarkation as well as to those who have served abroad, and that they shall also extend to one dependant of a deceased soldier or sailor. The Bill provides for the creation of a board to administer the Act. This board will consist of four members to be appointed by the Governor, one of whom will be a returned soldier, one a person not a member of the public service, and two Government officials. The duties of the board will be to investigate the qualifications of discharged soldiers who desire to settle on the land, to allot blocks and to recommend to the Agricultural Bank what assistance should be given in each case. The board is also given power to effect improvements on holdings prior to selection. The intention is to improve holdings before placing the soldier in occupation. By this course pioneering hardships will be removed and enable the soldier to bring his land to the profit stage at a much earlier date than would otherwise be the case. It may also be anticipated that a considerable saving in the cost of work can be effected by the use of up-to-date methods on a large scale. Employment would

also be created for a considerable number of men. Another function of the board will be to purchase single holdings as going concerns when considered advisable, and generally to control all matters in connection with the supervision, inspection, improvement before selection, and the control of group settlement in respect to land under the Act, in accordance with the regulations made thereunder. The Agricultural Bank will continue to control advances to soldiers, as it is not considered advisable to increase unnecessarily the cost of administration of settlement by another financial institution. The bank already has the machinery and the organisation to enable it to deal with the scheme in a satisfactory and economical way. Under the regulations, it is necessary for applicants to obtain a qualification certificate before applying for land or assistance under the scheme. A board consisting of a representative of the Lands Department, the Agricultural Bank, and the Returned Soldiers' Association, will sit weekly or more often, if necessary, to hear applicants and decide their qualifications. If the soldier proves to the satisfaction of the board that he is competent to undertake farming operations, a certificate to that effect is issued. Any proposition submitted by the soldier is then carefully investigated by the officer in charge of the soldiers' land settlement branch, or if he has no land in view, every effort is made to find him a suitable property. Up to the present about 780 inquiries have been received altogether from soldiers desiring to settle on the land. This includes a large number of men who have merely made casual inquiries, and who, having asked about the scheme, have not reappeared to make any definite application.

Hon. J. Cornell: That arises out of the fact that they got no satisfaction.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not think so. A number of these are men who have had no farming experience, and have sought employment more suited to their particular cases. Altogether 236 men have been assisted under the scheme. Of these nine have been assisted on pastoral holdings, about 16 on poultry farms, a number of small orchards and mixed farms have been purchased for various soldiers, and the balance have mostly been placed on approved farms in the wheat districts. Reports indicate that on the whole the men are progressing satisfactorily, and are satisfied with their prospects. The contention is that the 236 men who have been settled have been satisfactorily settled. In New South Wales there are 26,000 discharged soldiers. Of this number 3,330 have applied for land, 764, or 23 per cent., have been settled, and the value of the estates repurchased has been £1,089,000. In Victoria there are 19,000 discharged soldiers; 2,750 have applied for land, 550, or 20 per cent. of the applicants have been settled, and the value of estates repurchased is £548,000. In Queensland there are 9,451 discharged soldiers; 1,837 have applied for land, 433 have been settled, which is 23½ per cent. of the applicants, and the value of the estates repur-

chased is £2,679. In South Australia, 6,000 soldiers have been discharged, 800 have applied for land, 260 have been settled, or 32½ per cent., and the value of repurchased estates is £500,000. In Western Australia 6,476 soldiers have been discharged, 780 have made inquiries for land, 236 have been settled, equal to 25 per cent., and the State has not so far repurchased estates. As a supplement to this Bill there is a Bill to amend the Repurchase Act. Therefore it will be seen that Western Australia has settled a larger percentage of applicants, with the exception of South Australia, than any other State. One reason, probably the chief, why a large proportion of those making inquiries have not been settled on the land is that the physical condition of the majority of the returned men is not such as to fit them for pioneering work. Obviously that must be the case, as most of them would not have been returned if they had been fit for hard pioneering work such as would enable a man to go on to virgin country. Consequently it is deemed necessary and desirable that they should be settled on improved or partly improved holdings. In order to permit of this being done the Government have decided to purchase improved estates, and the land purchase board is now engaged in making an inspection of certain estates offered to the Government in the South-West. The intention is to purchase estates for subdivision into small holdings suitable for dairying and other industries. Dairying alone offers great possibilities, and the Government feel assured that with this as a basis of operations the prospects for success are bright for those who can be settled in suitable country in the South-West. Such settlement should prove not only beneficial to the men but to the State. A large number of estates have been offered to the Government for repatriation purposes, but in very many cases the prices demanded are such as to put the purchase out of consideration. The owners of estates will have to understand that land cannot be purchased except at bedrock rates, and then only when it can be shown that the producing capacity is sufficient to give the settler a living after allowing for outgoings. That is one reason why the work must go on slowly, and why the percentage is not greater than at present. Provision is made in this Bill to give the board authority to improve holdings prior to selection. This course will be adopted wherever it is considered advisable, and if successful the question of applying the practice to the virgin land of the State on an enlarged scale, irrespective of the question of soldier settlement, may be seriously considered. But I think there is little doubt that it is unwise to adopt this system of improvement before settlement unless we know that settlers are available. They must step in at once, as soon as the place is ready, otherwise if you are going to make improvements and wait for the men, everyone who knows anything about farming will realise that you are going to throw away a great deal of money. The ready-made farm may be all right, but it is a principle that must be carried

on with great discrimination. Although this power is given to the board, it is fully recognised that it will have to be exercised with discretion. On the Yandanooka estate, nine returned soldiers have been allotted blocks, of which eight have been settled on 12,433 acres. A number of these are actively engaged in developing their holdings. They have been granted loans under the provisions of the soldiers settlement scheme totalling £5,400. The balance of the estate will be made available as soon as certain requisite surveys are completed and water supplies arranged for. It is estimated that this land will satisfactorily accommodate 40 or 50 men. The Public Works Department has been engaged for some time in locating dam sites, and contracts for a number of dams have been let. The ground was carefully tested by boring, and every precaution taken to ensure that when the lands are cut up they will be satisfactory. In the Avondale estate five blocks have been allotted, and arrangements have been made to follow a reasonable amount of each holding. The homestead has been retained, and will be used as a training farm when the necessity arises. Ten soldiers have been settled on the Korejickup irrigation area, and have been granted loans amounting to £3,525 to carry on operations. They are working under the personal supervision of the irrigation expert. This is generally known as the Harvey irrigation estate. At the Riverton estate five men are preparing their holdings for intense culture, and have had loans granted to them to the extent of £2,225.

Hon. J. Ewing: How are they getting on?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: At Osborne Park an area of 224 acres has been purchased especially for poultry farming, and subdivided into 25 lots. Ten of the farms have been completed and consist in each case of a comfortable dwelling house, windmill and water supply, poultry runs, outbuildings, and all necessary equipment. These farms it is important to remember were never intended as the sole and complete source of livelihood for these men. They are reserved exclusively for maimed men, men who choose that form of living considering that, with the income they can derive from their poultry farming added to their pension, they will be able to make a really good livelihood and have a decent living. Ten soldiers are already in possession of these poultry farms, and the expenditure has been approximately £700 on each holding. It is recognised that the scope afforded by the poultry industry is not unlimited, and it is not proposed to further extend this scheme at present. I doubt if there would be any justification for doing so.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: Has it not been killed by the Wheat Marketing Board?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Nine men have taken up pastoral leases aggregating 760,000 acres, and the sum of £4,150 has been advanced for the purchase of livestock, and for improvements. The pastoral leases are in the following districts:—Pilbara (1), Murchison (1), Ninghan (2), Teano (4), and Esperance (1). Seven of the holdings are sheep propositions, and two are cattle propo-

sitions. The advance can be used for the purchase of stock, or if the soldier can arrange for stock on long terms, the money can be used for the purpose of developing the lease. It has been ascertained that some men can obtain stock on long terms, and are using the advances for fencing, water supply, and general equipment. The whole of the assisted soldiers have good pastoral holdings and are being backed either by relatives or friends, and their success ought to be assured. Several other pastoral propositions are under consideration, and it is thought that a fair number of men will avail themselves of the opportunities afforded by this portion of the Scheme.

Hon. J. Mills: Are you referring to Crown lands or pastoral leases?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: In some cases it is an individual repurchase. The returned soldier has perhaps been enabled to purchase a property, but in most cases the leases are taken from Crown lands. It is considered desirable to confine the pastoral propositions to experienced men only, as far as possible to men who have worked on stations prior to enlistment and are, therefore, familiar with the climatic conditions. This circumstance and the fact that their old employers are generally ready to give practical assistance to them will be a big factor in their chance of success. Opportunity will be offered to any returned soldiers who desire to obtain pastoral experience of doing so, and if they desire to take up land under these conditions, an opportunity will be given to them of taking up such land. The following cases are typical of the financial assistance that is being given by the Agricultural Bank, and indicate that the soldier is being treated in a manner which will enable him to successfully develop his property. On the Harvey irrigation estate there is a settler with an area of 39 acres. An advance of £500 was approved, of which £450 4s. 11d. has already been advanced. It is interesting to see how this money has been expended. For furniture and freight £21 8s. 7d. was expended, and for sustenance at 9s. a day during the time the soldier was clearing his property £32 12s. 9d. has been expended. For application fees £5 was spent, for Lands Department fees £3 13s. 4d. was spent, a total of £8 13s. 4d., on fruit trees £8 5s. 1d., buildings £146 5s. 5d., fencing £17 7s. 7d., horse, cart and harness, £29 17s. 2d., cows £28 0s. 2d., ploughing £13 6s. 1d., seeds, etc., and manures, £35 13s. 3d., and incidentals, of which no details are given, £73 12s. 2d. I have here a number of cases on comparatively the same lines.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: Are these State advances?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: These are advances under arrangement with the Commonwealth Government, which advanced £500 in each case. The whole thing is done through the Agricultural Bank.

Hon. J. Duffell: What are the application fees of £5 for?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: These are application fees for the land. In accordance with the decision of the Premiers' conference, soldiers are being granted special concessions

in regard to the rate of interest payable on loans. The Commonwealth Government have found a sum of £500 per man, and on this amount the soldier is required to pay only  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. during the first year, and thereafter an extra half per cent. until the fixed rate is reached. In addition, the Government are granting free railway passes for men attending the Qualification Board and to inspect the land. The Bill provides for further concessions of a substantial nature.

Hon. J. Mills: What interest are you charging on repurchased estates?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is dealt with in the Repurchased Estates Bill. Provision is made that the interest shall be the same as is paid, and the State will suffer whatever loss there is in the administration. There will be a slight loss because it will leave no margin for working expenses. One important concession made by the Bill to the soldier is that he obtains his land at half of the fixed price. This provision will not apply to repurchased estates, but to land purchased from the Crown.

Hon. J. Nicholson: That unfortunately is not made clear in the memorandum prefacing the Repurchased Estates Bill.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The price is fixed under the Land Act and will be reduced by one half. The price of repurchased estates is not fixed under the Land Act, but under the Repurchased Estates Act. This speaks of the price fixed under the Land Act. Under the Repurchased Estates Bill it is made clear exactly what has to be paid.

Hon. J. Ewing: How much land do the soldiers get free in the South-West?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: They are entitled to a homestead block of 160 acres anywhere in the State. There was a proposal, I believe, in another place that they should have 640 acres free and pay the full price for the balance.

Hon. J. Ewing: On wheat lands?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: When, however, it was worked out, it was found that in the majority of cases of mixed farming the soldier would be a little worse off than under the Government proposal.

Hon. J. Mills: Why not give them 1,000 acres?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Why not give them as much land as they want free?

Hon. J. Cornell: What are you going to give free to the men who cannot go on the land?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The State has to do all it can for returned soldiers, as I was just going to say, and although it might be contended—I do not know but that it could be contended with a good deal of sound argument behind it—that if we could give all our Crown lands free, with restrictions as to area and improvements, possibly the State would not lose anything by it. But that is not what we are discussing. We say we are in the habit of charging people a certain price for land, but so far as the returned soldier is concerned we give it to him at half price. All advances made to the discharged soldier must be secured by first mortgage over the

settler's holding and in addition a lien will be taken over crops and chattels where such crops and chattels are the result of advances made by the Bank. It is further provided that the land, crops and chattels cannot be alienated by legal process until the advances have been repaid. I have a statement here setting out in detail the loans applied for since the inception of the Scheme on the 5th April, 1917, to the 30th November, 1918. Applications were received by the bank for £86,950 and the applications approved amounted to £77,500, moiety declined £3,525, declined in full £5,925, a total of £86,950. The Agricultural Bank properties that have been taken over by the returned soldiers number 35. These are properties which were on the hands of the Agricultural Bank and have been taken over under the Soldiers' Settlement Scheme. In each case the amount of liability taken over by the soldier has been not the amount of liability which stood in the books of the Agricultural Bank, but the amount which it was considered the improvements were worth. In a number of cases these properties have been abandoned, and the value of the improvements is necessarily reduced. The State has to find that loss in any case, whether the property is sold to returned soldiers or to anyone else. No one has to take over those liabilities except at what the assets which have been created are worth. The amount of liability to be taken over by the soldier settler has been fixed in 27 cases and the particulars are as follow:—Liability at the time of re-selection £9,568, in bank principal it was reduced by £1,181, leaving the liability taken over by the settler at £8,387. The bank interest at the time of re-selection was £1,902, the amount written off was £1,457, leaving a liability taken over by the settler of £445. The Industries Assistance Board principal at the time of re-selection stood at £810 and the amount written off was £470, leaving a liability taken over by the settler of £340. The Industries Assistance Board interest was £44, and the amount written off was £35, leaving a liability taken over by the settler of £8. In the grand total, therefore, the sum of something like £3,000 was written off the properties in order that the returned soldier should not be called upon to pay more than they were actually worth. Coming to the provisions of the Bill, Clause 3 gives the definitions. The definitions here are practically the same as they are in similar Acts in the other States. The definitions of "discharged soldiers" and "dependants" were the outcome of an agreement at a conference at which the Commonwealth and all the States were represented. The definition of "dependant" is the same as in Victoria. New South Wales does not provide for dependant. That is to say, in their Land Settlement Act, they provide for the returned soldier only and not for the dependant. Our definition is in accordance with the agreement arrived at with the Commonwealth. Queensland includes dependants in the same manner as we do. The definition of "discharged soldier" is practically the same as in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, but Queensland provides also for soldiers of

Allied nations. Clause 5 deals with the Board. The administration of the Act in various States is as follows: Victoria—Closer Settlement Board under the Minister for Lands; New South Wales—Minister for Lands and authorities constituted under the Crown Lands Act, Closer Settlements Act and Murrumbidgee Irrigation Act; South Australia—Minister for Repatriation working under the Land Act and Irrigation and Reclaimed Lands Act; Queensland—Minister for Lands, the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Act being read as one with the Lands Act; Tasmania—Administered by the Minister for Lands and Works, who administers the Closer Settlement Board, and the President of that board. The President and members of the board are all salaried officials. New Zealand—The Act is administered by the Minister for Lands and the Land Board. The New South Wales Act is administered by the Minister for Lands and the Land Board. Clause 8 gives power to set apart land exclusively for selection by soldiers. Because land is set apart under this clause it does not follow that advances will be made to assist the soldier who selects it. The land may not be sufficiently good to support a man, or be good enough security for an advance, but there may be many soldiers who have private means and who hold other land, who may wish to acquire more land to increase their existing holdings, and if they apply for land thrown open under this clause, they will have the preference over the general public. With regard to town lots, a soldier may want a town lot on which to erect a shop or dwelling and power is given to grant it to him on special terms. In regard to the qualification certificate, in New South Wales the board issuing the certificate is termed the Qualification Committee. Similar investigations are made in South Australia and Tasmania. In Queensland there is presumably a similar board, as the soldier must have received an honourable discharge and any application made by him has to be accompanied by evidence to that effect. Under Clause 10 land will be specially selected for returned soldiers and advances will be made on it for the various purposes mentioned in Clause 14. This power is taken in order to ease the burden on soldiers buying large blocks of high priced land such as that of Avondale and Yandanooka. Had they to commence paying instalments on purchase money at once before they had their plans in going order, it would probably be impossible for them to do it, whereas if they have several years to become established in their holdings they would have a better chance of making good. This provision is similar to that of Victoria, except that five years without payment is given in Western Australia. In Queensland a perpetual lease is given for the first three years free; after three years, the survey fee is to be paid in ten annual instalments; from the fourth year to the fifteenth year the rent is £1 10s. per cent. of the notified capital value; and after

fifteen years, the rent is determined by the Land Court, being  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. on the unimproved capital value. With regard to Clause 11, it is thought that where Crown lands are allotted to a soldier, it will be a small thing for the State to do to give it to them at half price. It must be noted that this does not apply to land repurchased for the purpose of settlement. The State can not in this case afford to lose money over the transaction. No similar provisions as to reduction in price of Crown lands are provided for in other Acts. It is important to remember that the concession applies not only to returned soldiers who after their return acquired Crown lands, but also to men who, before they went away, were occupying land under C.P. conditions and who have now returned to resume their holdings. It is estimated that this may mean a matter of £25,000 per annum in land rents. Taking the average period of payments still to run at 10 years, the total will amount to £250,000. In connection with Clause 12, it is recognised that the earlier years of a station are the most expensive, as wells have to be sunk, fencing done, etc., and by lightening the burden for the first five years, by charging no rent, the squatter soldier will have a better chance to make good.

Hon. J. Mills: Is there a clause to prevent the sale or the lease of that land?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes. It can only be sold on the same conditions to a returned soldier. Clause 13 gives the board power to improve land prior to its allotment to a soldier. Paragraph (b) of that clause gives the power to improve land already held by a soldier, but the power is restricted to the earlier years of the tenure of a holding, the limit being three years. Paragraph (c) covers cases in which land allotted to a soldier has been insufficiently improved, on which the board may deem it wise to make sufficient improvements to enable a second tenant to make a good start. The clause is similar to that in Victoria. In New South Wales the Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission may spend money in improvements. It is hard to compare provisions in the various States as the work in the preparation of the land is done by differently constituted boards. In New South Wales it is the Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission; in South Australia the work is carried out under the Land Act and Irrigation and Reclaimed Lands Act. In Tasmania it is done by the Discharged Settlement Board; and in Queensland under the Discharged Soldiers Act in conjunction with the Land Act. The provisions of Clause 14 of the Bill are similar to those in the Acts of the other States. With regard to Clause 18, we have seen cases in the metropolitan area where generous individuals have given land and members of bodies like the Ugly Men's Association have given their time and erected on the land so given buildings for soldiers or their dependants. In some of the other States the practice is extensively followed

It is a practice that should be encouraged, and this clause gives the Government the power, if land is available, to give land for such a purpose, or to charge a rate lower than the usual rate. Clause 19 provides for special settlements—group settlements. A soldier entering one of these settlements, enters it on trial. The settlements will be under close supervision, and if a soldier fails to make good and proves unlikely to make a good settler, or behaves himself in such a way as to make himself an undesirable member of a settlement, he must stand aside for some other man. As soon as the board is satisfied that he has proved himself, a title, conditional purchase or freehold, will be issued to him. In South Australia it is provided that members of group settlements must be married men.

Hon. J. Mills: Does this apply to repurchased land, or to any land?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: There is a wide difference of opinion as to the extent to which group settlements can be profitably carried on. My idea is that it will be successful only to a limited extent. Still, that is no reason why we should not give it a trial.

Hon. J. Mills: What advantage do those men in the group settlements have over others?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: In some cases it may be an advantage to work properties in common, and there may be in that way better social conditions, and it may be easier to provide schools, etc. My opinion is, however, that men do not work so well when they are grouped.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: It will be too much like New Australia.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Probably. Still, there is no objection to trying it. Clause 20 will enable a soldier who has made up his mind to settle on the land on his return, to secure land in advance of his return. It will enable his relatives, or friends, to improve it in his absence, so that on his return he will have a holding to which he can go without delay. A similar provision exists in Queensland. Clause 21 provides for cases in which a soldier was the holder of land before he enlisted, and who may obtain land by transfer on his return.

Hon. J. Cornell: What about the soldier who has never been out of the Commonwealth?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The clause reads—

The privileges conferred by this Act on discharged soldiers may, on the recommendation of the board, be extended by the Minister to any discharged soldier—(a) who is the holder of land for an estate in fee simple, or a conditional purchase lessee under the Land Act 1898, or (b) to whom a conditional purchase lease under the said Act has been duly transferred.

When we turn to the definition of "discharged soldier" we find that it provides that it may include soldiers who have never been out of the Commonwealth. It makes it quite

clear who are to be treated as discharged soldiers. It says—

(a) any person who being or having been a resident in the Commonwealth or the Dominion of New Zealand was appointed as an officer or enlisted as a member of the naval or military forces of the Commonwealth, or was appointed as an officer or enlisted in the United Kingdom, or in any of His Majesty's Dominions for service in His Majesty's naval or military forces, and has served in such forces in the present war outside the Commonwealth;

The second definition of "discharged soldier" reads—

(b) any person who being or having been resident in the Commonwealth was appointed as an officer or enlisted in the naval or military forces of the Commonwealth for active service abroad in the present war, but whose service was confined to the Commonwealth, and who, in the opinion of the board, was unable, through circumstances not within his own control, to serve abroad as aforesaid; and in either such case—

(c) has received his discharge, and is resident in the Commonwealth.

I think that is a fair definition. A man may be prevented from going outside the Commonwealth and there is no reason why he should not be treated as a returned soldier. Clause 22 gives power to the Government to purchase a single block which a soldier may fancy, always provided that the owner is willing to sell, and allow him to pay for it on extended terms. This clause may be applied to the purchase of pastoral leases. Such leases in good positions are hard to obtain direct from the Crown, whereas it is often possible to obtain them by purchase from holders who have surplus land to dispose of. Clause 23 provides for the establishment of training farms. Both the Victorian and New South Wales Acts have a similar provision. Clause 24 applies to the settlement of discharged soldiers on certain private land. In several parts of the State local organisations are raising funds to assist soldiers on their return. This clause gives power to the Government to supplement their efforts if the mode of assistance is approved by the board.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: What happens if the soldier dies; what becomes of the land?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I take it that in such circumstances his dependants will be entitled to carry on the operations under the same conditions.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Suppose the land is sold after the death of the soldier; under what conditions will the purchaser hold it?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I should say that the conditions set out in Clause 25 would apply. If the land was sold to another returned soldier or anyone coming within this definition then they would still pay half the rent, but if purchased by anyone else they would have to pay the full rent. There is nothing to prevent him willing it to anyone, and that person would have the same right and restrictions as he had. He can only will what he has got. Anyone he willed it to would have what he had and nothing more or less. I do not think any special provision is re-



quired to meet such cases. Clause 25 is inserted to prevent dummying by the agency of soldiers. Where we acquire land for soldiers, make improvements on it, or advance money for making improvements, if a soldier is unable to remain on the land, it should go to another soldier if one is available. In Clause 26 an amendment was made in another place, the meaning of which I confess I am quite unable to understand. The clause as introduced was "The Governor may extend the provisions of this Act to advances made before the commencement of this Act in furtherance of any scheme for the settlement of discharged soldiers on the land." In another place for some reason the words "with the sanction of the Government" were inserted. I propose to strike out these words in Committee in the hope that it will lead to some enlightenment of the meaning. Clause 27 deals with the financial provisions. Members will notice that in Subclause 2 the amount of £50,000 is mentioned. That money is for the general expenses of the board and may also be used for the purpose of single properties and to effect improvements prior to selection. It is considered that the sum, bearing in mind the limited use to which it is intended to put it—because it is not intended to cover the £500 which will be made by the Commonwealth to the Agricultural Bank in respect to every soldier—will be sufficient for 12 months and a large percentage of it will be recouped from time to time from the Commonwealth advances of £500. That is to say, where portions of this £50,000 are used for preparing the land prior to settlement, as soon as the man goes on it he takes up a mortgage in the usual way and the money is paid to the board from the Agricultural Bank. As I have already intimated there is another Bill entitled the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act Amendment Bill, which in a measure relates to this same Bill, but which I do not intend to deal with in detail at the present time. I beg to move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. J. CORNELL (South) [5.50]: I do not desire to delay the passage of this Bill. There is very little in the Bill with which fault can be found. The hon. the leader of the House in explaining the provisions of the Bill has given the House to understand that although the Bill is long overdue and has been delayed, the Government have to a large extent been proceeding with the settlement of soldiers on the land. I take it that in what settlement they have done this Bill will be in a sense retrospective. I listened to the long and lucid speech of the hon. the leader of the House to see if he would give a pronouncement on behalf of the Government of any concrete attempt to deal with the soldier generously. I am somewhat embittered at the delay that has occurred. More than 2½ years ago I realised that in conjunction with the prosecution of the war, provision should be made to meet the return of the men, and while I was away for a short time I wrote several letters to public men in this State pointing out the necessity for this. The people of this country had during my absence from the State elected

a Government which promised to do great things for the soldier, but my voice will probably be like a voice crying in the wilderness. I realise that the time has arrived, and is overdue in this State and in Australia generally, when the reins of government should be in the hands of men, not of any particular party, but of those who are prepared to do things and not say them. I warn hon. members in dealing with this Bill not to be carried away in their anxiety to benefit the returned soldier. The Bill has its peculiarities and will, I venture to assert, only provide repatriation for a very small section of our soldiers, and in a very large degree, probably, that section of our soldiers who do not require to be repatriated in as effective a manner as the remainder. This fact must also be borne in mind, that a beneficent country, or the taxpayer generally, made up his mind 2½ years ago to find the necessary money to carry out this scheme. The Bill among other things provides that a soldier or his dependant, if the board approved of the application, becomes entitled to whatever land may be allotted to him at half the value charged to any other person. This condition is also to apply to any soldier holding a conditional purchase lease prior to his enlistment. Another concession is that the Minister may defer payment for the land allotted for a period of five years, and I would like to know in passing who is to pay the interest on the improvements during that period? This provision may also be extended to pastoral leases. Another concession is that a person approved under the Bill gets £500, which may be advanced by the Agricultural Bank in virtue of the grant agreed upon by the Federal Government, and there is a sliding scale of interest until such time as the rate of interest at which the money was raised is reached, and the difference is paid by the taxpayer. I am of opinion that the House can pass these clauses without any debate at all. If hon. members want any further concessions, then they are not going to get my vote. Let us say for argument sake that 640 acres have been allotted at say £1 an acre. The State grants a concession of £300; it provides that they can raise £500 to improve the land at a lower rate of interest than that at which the sum is raised. That would only apply, I venture to say, to 10 per cent. of our soldiers, and as I have already said, would probably apply to a percentage of our soldiers who are in a better financial position than the others. Not more than 10 per cent. of our soldiers who have enlisted will settle on the land in the next three or four years. Why? In the first place, I understand that we are only to have a grant of £500,000, and the 10 per cent. will absorb that. The leader of the House said in introducing the Bill that it is in the direction of giving encouragement to land settlement. Let us approach it more in the direction of settlement than as a question of repatriation for the whole of our soldiers. If you are going to approach the project from the point of view of repatriation, then the consideration that is extended to the pastoralist's or farmer's son should be given to the Australian "Ginger Mick" son. There is nothing on our Notice

Paper to indicate in any direction how the remaining section of the Australian Army are going to be repatriated in a systematic manner.

Hon. J. EWING: Are the Federal Government doing anything?

Hon. J. CORNELL: The Federal Government give sustenance, but the Colonial Secretary says that cannot go on.

The Colonial Secretary: I said they did not want it to go on.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Fully 90 per cent. of the soldiers I have met, those who can work, know that there is no other fate in store for them but to work. They are pleased to be able to work, and they prefer to do that than to go to the Repatriation Department and draw sustenance. There are soldiers drawing sustenance to-day from the Repatriation Department to whom it is like blood money. They desire to earn their own keep by the sweat of their brow. The Colonial Secretary has said that apart from this Bill he is of opinion that the most effective means of repatriation for our soldiers is by the stimulation of industries. I quite agree with that. But how are we going to provide for the soldiers in the interim? Instead of remaining in a state of flux, as it were, and paying sustenance to our soldiers until such time as industries become stimulated in Western Australia, so as to absorb them, I think that the better way would be to employ those soldiers, who have not been absorbed, on some repatriation work of a gigantic nature, which will at all events repay posterity if it does not repay us. I am tired of hearing of what may be done; what I want to hear is what will be done and when it will be done. The hands of the Government are tied. They are in a sense dependent on the Federal Government, and probably the Federal Government are dependent on someone else. The time has long since passed when we should act and not talk. There has been too much flag-wagging and too much talking for the last two or three years. We have arrived at the stage when the soldiers are asking what the Government are going to do for them. They are only asking for what has been promised and what they are entitled to. There is no Bill on the Notice Paper which is going to adequately provide for the repatriation of our soldiers. We will shortly go into recess, and in the ordinary course of events will meet again next June. I hope by that time the great majority of the Australian army will have been demobilised. The position is acute to-day. There are 400 men asking for employment of the Repatriation Department. I have tramped this town to get work for returned soldiers. I have always made myself known as a member of Parliament, thinking it would help me along, but if the receptions that I have had are also extended to returned soldiers when looking for work, I say God help them. They will not get a very sympathetic hearing. The position will become more acute when our 20,000 odd men, who are away on active service come back here, jumping out of their skins and ready to work. It will be a calamity if, through the sins of omission on the part of the Government, any unnecessary

hardship is placed upon these soldiers. I venture to say that the first party to be affected will be that which now occupies the Treasury benches. It is regrettable that I should have to say it, but there is a section of this State which has only to raise a finger or crack the whip for the Government, as we know it to-day, to move whether they have the money or not. That is not good. The soldiers have said, as an association, that they will not take part in politics. My advice to them has been to do to all political parties what one political party is doing to this Government, and that is to sandbag the lot of them. With regard to the Bill, the Colonial Secretary has given us the definition of discharged soldier. The Bill provides for two classes, the man who has done service overseas, and the man who has not. Viewing the matter from the land settlement point of view, I would say that probably the man who has not done service overseas will make just as good a settler as the returned soldier. Seeing that the whole thing is left to the discretion of a board, I think that Parliament should say whether or not the soldier, who has been overseas and has had a long length of service, is to have preference over the soldier who has not done service overseas. That is a question for Parliament to decide and not the board. If we left it to the discretion of the board we might have this position: that the soldier who has been overseas for probably three or four years and has seen active service throughout that time, with certain spells off, might be put aside in favour of the man who has never left the Commonwealth, although not through any fault of his own.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: Do you fear any scarcity of land?

Hon. J. CORNELL: I am merely pointing out what may occur. The men who have not gone abroad are not so much entitled to consideration as those who have been on active service.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: What are you going to do with the men who left the Commonwealth too late to take part in the war?

Hon. J. CORNELL: The man who has gone beyond the camps in England should get preference over the man who did not leave Australia. If there is to be any differentiation Parliament should make it, and not the board. As far as I can see, there is going to be a shelving of responsibility which should devolve upon Parliament. That is a good way of getting over the difficulty so far as the Government are concerned. Clause 4, Subclause 2, says—

This Act shall not apply to any discharged soldier if the termination of his appointment or his discharge from service was due to misconduct or incapacity resulting from his own default, and the board certifies that in its opinion the benefits of this Act should not be extended to him.

To the unsophisticated that may read very well, but I venture to say that when we inquired into the matter of the soldiers who have been discharged from the Australian army, upon what is considered to be not a proper or hon-

ourable discharge, we would be very ready to err on the side of generosity regarding them. There are many cases of men who have done two years' service in the actual battle zone, and who probably have been sent back to Australia for doing what 90 per cent. of the soldiers in the army have done, but unfortunately they have been found out whilst the others have been overlooked. If we probed to the bottom of these cases we would find that in the light of equity and justice these men should have had an honourable discharge. No one who has not served in the military has any conception of what military law, military order, or military verdicts are.

Hon. J. Cunningham: We have heard something about them.

Hon. J. CORNELL: This clause should really come out of the Bill. There are men who have done honourable service at the front, and have been discharged, but have not received an honourable discharge. There will be so few of them that I think each case should be considered on its merits. In civil life we should not perpetrate the iniquity which is often brought into being in military life.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Before tea I had reached the question of the board to be appointed under the Bill. The Minister has pointed out that the land boards in New South Wales have this power delegated to them. The system of land purchase in New South Wales is very elaborate. Various boards are elected in various localities, and their powers are large. The boards there, in dealing with the applications of discharged soldiers, will be dealing with something of which they have full knowledge, but the machinery here would be very new, and it is doubtful whether the results obtained in New South Wales will be achieved by the board here. There is what seems to me a departure, in that one of the members of the board is to be a discharged soldier. I do not know whether that provision obtains in any of the other States. The board is to consist of four members, but I can find nothing to show who is to be the chairman, or who is to elect the chairman. I should like some information on both those points. In respect of a board of this character which will be called upon to perform such far-reaching functions. Parliament should know how the chairman is to be elected, and whether or not he is to have a deliberative as well as a casting vote. If a full board is present and the chairman has only a deliberative vote, the voting might be even. Personally, I am not in favour of the chairman exercising a casting vote. I think that where the voting is equal, the question ought to be resolved in the negative. I should like the leader of the House, when replying, to make clear these points. The duties of the board are very large. The board will practically decide who is to participate in the benefits under the measure. It will be called upon to decide as to the medical fitness of the applicant, and as to his other qualifications. It is to be hoped

that in regard to the medical question, more unanimity will emanate from the board than has emanated from the medical side of the Australian Imperial Forces. I take it that the board will decide on questions submitted to them by a medical officer. To-day a difficulty exists, for the department administering land settlement, which will come under this measure, accuses the medical side of not being sufficiently definite in its decisions as to the applicants. As far as my inquiries amongst soldiers have gone, I find that most of the dissatisfaction which exists is in regard to the medical side, and the findings as to the qualifications which the board will decide upon. I venture to say that in the long run it will be found that the question of success on the land will devolve upon the adaptability and temperament, rather than the training, of the soldier settler. I myself was reared on the land, yet I venture to say I have met soldiers who, although they have never been upon the land, would, if they went on the land side by side with me, eventually see me out. The board will have some difficulty in deciding as to the fitness of a person to settle on the land. I do not agree with paragraph (c) of Sub-clause (1) of Clause 6. Therein it is provided that in the event of there being more than one applicant, the board shall decide as to which of the applicants the block shall be allotted. For over 30 years past in New South Wales the question of the allotment of conditional purchase leases has been in the last analysis decided by ballot. The land board considers the qualifications of the applicants, and if in the board's opinion more than one applicant is entitled to hold one particular block, those applicants go to a ballot. It is advisable that the same provision should be inserted in the Bill. The Board should decide merely on the medical fitness and the qualifications of an applicant. If there be more than one applicant for a given block, that block ought to be allotted for. In the same subclause it is provided that the board may delegate their power to any person approved by the Minister, and may accept and act upon the report of such person. To my way of thinking, the clause implies that the board may delegate all their powers to other persons. The provision is too wide. If the geography of the State or the financial position will not permit of the one board travelling about to hear applications, several boards ought to be constituted. I think the leader of the House has said that discharged soldiers, being intending applicants for land, will be given a free pass. If it is necessary that those applicants should come before a central board, it is not asking too much of the Government that free passes should be issued to those men. I am of opinion that the delegation of the powers of the board, as prescribed in the clause, is too loose and should be amended. I wish to make reference to the Repatriation Department in this State. In my experience no finer soldier could occupy the position of comptroller than he who fills the post to-day. But too much is expected of him, and in consequence he cannot get out of his office to go

about amongst the various boards and committees connected with the department. That is one of the reasons for the dissatisfaction that exists. If the work of the department allowed the Comptroller to get out and meet the various committees, we should have more satisfaction with the administration of the department. Mr. Kirwan referred to the possibility of a soldier dying, and asked how his case would be dealt with under the Bill. Personally, I cannot find in the Bill any provision for such a contingency. However, the Colonial Secretary has promised to look into the matter. There is one phase of the question which I would commend to the Colonial Secretary: the Bill provides for assisting discharged soldiers or their dependants. To my knowledge there are cases worthy of consideration. Let me set out one as an example: a certain party had conditional purchase land when he enlisted. He paid a certain amount of money to the Crown. He had effected certain improvements to the land. To effect those improvements probably the place has become encumbered. He goes, and makes the supreme sacrifice and the parent, although he may not be a dependant, is faced with this position: that his son has sunk a certain amount of money in his conditional purchase estate, probably the parent's money, the son has probably made a will, and the parent will take up the full liability. But had the son returned and not paid the supreme sacrifice, he would have been able to avail himself of this Act and have the liability of purchase reduced by one half. I am not advocating that that should be adopted in a general sense. I offer the suggestion for favourable consideration. A certain amount of money may have been expended. The parent has to decide whether or not it is worth going on with it, and the difference between sympathetic consideration and non-sympathetic consideration is that he might absolve himself from the conditional purchase estate. The other question is with regard to the repurchase of land. It has been pointed out by the Minister that land for repurchase has been offered at an exorbitant price and that he for one would not countenance paying an exorbitant price. I agree with him. There is no use in settling soldiers or anyone else on land at a price at which he cannot make it pay. There is a remedy whereby you can get land at reasonable values. If you are going to repurchase land, give the owner the price that he puts on for taxation purposes plus 10 per cent. There is nothing new in the suggestion, which been in vogue in New Zealand for 25 years. In conclusion, I want to know what Minister is to administer this Bill. I contend that the value of any Bill of this nature depends to a great extent on sympathetic administration and force of character to guide that administration. We are in this anomalous position to-day—of a Bill being introduced by the Minister for Lands and his powers delegated to another Minister. While I do not desire to say anything disparaging of the Minister who is to-day administering in an honorary capacity the portfolio of Lands, that office is a most important one and

if he continues in that position to administer to the wants of soldiers as he is administering in many directions, then I say woe betide the soldier. I have said probably harsh things in a sense about the Government. They have not put their shoulders to the wheel as I consider they should have done long before this. I charge the Government as a whole, and as far as the honourable Minister who leads this House is concerned, he has my sympathy. I include him with the rest of the Government, but I say this, if I were called upon to give a vote for the Minister to administer this Act, I should give it to him. But if it is his ill-luck to be associated with the rest of the Government in this measure, then he has to share the burden of the lot.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM (North) [7.50]: I cannot help prefacing my speech with a word of sympathy with the leader of the House after the statement just made of being in the unfortunate position of not being able to take charge of this Bill, and I agree with the member who has just sat down, if we were in the position he suggests. I do not propose to criticise the Bill, certainly not from a destructive point of view at all events. I must admit that it is a subject of which I do not know very much. I have not been mixed up with any of the proposals in connection with returned soldiers, nor have I been on any boards, nor am I well acquainted with their views on the subject. But there is no harm, perhaps, in discussing the question from a conversational aspect, with a view, perhaps, of putting a few suggestions which might be worthy of consideration later on. In the first place, I am not very sanguine that a large number of men will go on the land at all. I have had a good deal of experience of the land, both personally working on it and investing capital in it, and my experience is that it is not the most attractive form of occupation that most men would choose. It has been already stated that a very large number of those men who are returning are not in the best physical condition for work. Indeed, the Colonial Secretary stated that the Government would not think of giving these men pioneering work, but wanted to put them on ready-made farms. Even that observation shows a sort of superficial knowledge, because if he runs away with the idea that there is no work on a ready-made farm, he makes a great mistake. There is a great deal of work on a farm, even one brought to the highest state of development, to exercise the physical qualities of men in good health. Mr. Cornell stated that about 10 per cent. of the men would go on the land. That is not a large proportion. In carefully considering the matter I am wondering where all these men will come from who are wanted now to go on the land. They must have come from somewhere. I think I have stated before in this House that I am represented in five or six of the largest commercial establishments here, and all the arrangements are made to take back the men who enlisted into their positions, and these arrangements will be fully carried out. I have also intimated that I am connected with

Millar's Timber and Trading Co., and the other night I stated that instead of ten mills being at work, there are only two, and that all the arrangements were made and prepared, such as supervision, railway lines and engines, and everything has been kept in splendid order, so that every one of the men who went away will be able to come back to the avocation they left, if they wish to. As regards the farmers, I do not think many are actually proprietors. I should think most were either sons of farmers or connected with farmers, and I should think that those positions are readily open to them again. Therefore, from want of information, I would like to know where this large number of people are who wish to go on the land. Surely we are not going to start with inexperienced people for the land. We all remember in this House some years ago when it was said that a number of men were leaving the public service to go on to the land and make fine yeomen, as the late Lord Forrest called them, and fine producers. What happened! As far as I remember they were nearly all unsuccessful. Therefore it is no use putting inexperienced men on the land. Some people, and responsible people too, have the idea that it is only necessary to find the land and a man with money and he will make a success of it. There is nothing further from the fact. Experience and knowledge are very large factors in success, and it is no use thinking that any amateur can go on any land with money unless he knows how farming should be done. Then we have the objection that the returned soldier does not like to be isolated. My idea has always been that we should have probation places for these men to go to for three, six, or 12 months, to find out whether they really care for the life or not, and the Government had the matter in their hands. They could not have a better place as a probation farm than Yandanooka. The same applies to Avondale, and to those who do not like farms there is Brunswick, where there are the finest dairying possibilities perhaps that one could have. These are only suggestions; no doubt the board when created will be able to deal with all these matters.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Clauses 9 and 22 seem to cover these points.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: Clause 23 covers it exactly. What I am complaining about is that they have not taken the opportunity of turning these properties into probation places, without having to buy land in order to find out whether the men like the work.

The Colonial Secretary: The homesteads in each case are held for this purpose.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I am very glad to hear it. The Colonial Secretary said that if the war lasted two or three years more we should have to spend a lot of money. I do not know his idea of how long the war was likely to last. I think it lasted much longer than anyone anticipated it would, and therefore it is no use looking at it from that point of view. There is a splendid opportunity to carry out the theory that has been spoken of in this House, and written up in the Press considerably. I think Mr. Dodd is very much

in favour of it. It is that a large area of land alongside the railways is held by people who will make no use of it, and who are waiting for it to be sold at an increased price. I only presume he thinks that.

Hon. J. E. Dodd: There are large areas in the City.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: That is not my point. The hon. member went further and said that this land should be taxed to keep the railways going. That was the theory he advanced. It is claimed by hon. members and others in this State that there are a lot of people who are allowing their land which is adjacent to the railways to remain idle. It is claimed that that land is of good quality, and now is the opportunity for the Government to acquire it. I cannot understand the statement made by the Colonial Secretary that people ask too much for their properties when the Government approach them. I say, resume them.

The Colonial Secretary: That is what the Bill is for.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: And if the land exists along the railway lines as has been pointed out, by all means let us take it.

Hon. J. Mills: How would you like that theory advanced in connection with pastoral leases?

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I am talking about unoccupied lands. If we go from Bridgetown to Nannine, I do not think we will get 1,000 acres of unoccupied land along the whole of that stretch that is worth troubling about. But if it does exist, as Mr. Dodd has stated, then it is the duty of the Government to resume it. We have heard something about group settlements. There is a great deal to recommend them. I have had the advantage of seeing these group settlements in France and Germany, and the method they have there is that no property is fenced. Everyone lives in a commune. They have a church and a school—I forget whether they have a beer house—at all events they are a happy community. Everyone knows his boundary. I asked once how it was that the fruit was not stolen, and I was informed that the men and women were always about at work in the day time, while at night there were always watchers. There is a lot to recommend this communal system, if it can be carried out, but we have to take into consideration the temperament of the two nations. As the Colonial Secretary said, he very much questioned whether the British and the Australian would care about living so close together. But this is carried out well in the places I have mentioned. I have, however, had no practical experience and am not aware whether communal settlements have been successful. I am glad to see that provision is made for them in the Bill. I feel that the Government are trying to make an honest effort to do the best they can, and it is for all of us to help in every way. Of course, it is impossible to provide for everything in the Bill, but so far as I am concerned, there is nothing I will not do to assist the returned soldier and particularly those who have gone through hard times. There may be some who went but did not happen to get to the battle front, but they went all

the same and showed they were willing, and we cannot do too much to make them satisfied on their return. At the same time we must endeavour to carry out the work of repatriation with some discrimination. We can only ask a man to go on the land who is suited for it, and it is no good trying to make a farmer of a man who wants to go in for poultry raising or to make a sheep farmer of another who wants to grow oranges. With these few remarks, I have much pleasure in supporting the Bill.

Hon. J. MILLS (Central) [8.5]: I would like to preface my remarks by complimenting the leader of the House on the intelligent way in which he introduced the Bill to the House. I think the measure will be a workable one, but in my opinion it has not gone far enough. To begin with, in regard to the waste lands of the Crown, I advocated some time ago, and I still advocate it, that soldiers returning from the Front should be granted the freehold of 1,000 acres. By this means we will make land settlement attractive. At the present time the Bill provides that any soldier shall get his land at half price. That, in my opinion, is not sufficient. Most of the lands were classified when the values were inflated, and in some instances they were classified by junior surveyors who knew nothing about the practical part of their work further than running the lines. I think that 50 per cent. of the blocks which are unoccupied to-day are 50 per cent. above their real value. Therefore, if we give the soldier the advantage of half price, he will still be paying the full price for it. I urge that the question of granting soldiers 1,000 acres of freehold be favourably considered by this House and I have gone to the extent of placing on the Notice Paper an amendment which I propose to submit to hon. members when the Bill is in Committee. That amendment reads—

Every soldier having served overseas and who has obtained a qualification certificate shall, subject to residence and improvement conditions being fulfilled as provided by the Land Act, 1893, and amendments, be entitled to receive a Crown grant in fee simple of any agricultural waste land of the Crown not exceeding 1,000 acres free of rent or purchase money.

All pastoral leases were made to fall out in 1928, but during last year an amending Act was passed permitting these leases to be renewed until 1948. This precludes our boys who have fought for us from ever participating in one acre of those areas. That in my opinion was a most regrettable piece of legislation, but it appears to be irrevocable. There is nothing we can do to end it and we have to submit to the inevitable. But there is another means that I would suggest. We are repurchasing private lands in order to repatriate our soldiers. If we give £2 for an acre of land—and it will be poor quality land even at that price—we add to that six per cent. over a period of 20 years. That increases the value of the land another 11s. per £1, so that after allowing for survey, computation, and deduction for roads, in all probability the land which originally cost £2 per acre will run into £3 10s. That will be an almost impossible

price unless it is first-class land and is highly improved. What I would suggest as a remedy is this: there is no question that a lot of private land will have to be purchased for the returned soldiers and we should impose an export tax on wool. The pastoralists have appropriated to themselves the very cream of the pastoral lands of the State for all time, and if they want to hold that land they should pay for it in some shape or form. I suggest that the payment should take the form of an export tax on wool, and with the revenue that would be derived we should purchase freehold lands in this State. I intend to move an amendment in a supplementary Bill we shall be dealing with later on, that the compulsory clauses shall apply to pastoral lands as well as to freehold lands. The equity of redemption in big estates will probably be enormous. But what would that have been if the Germans had come here? Would there have been any equity of redemption then? I ask that of those gentlemen who are princely wealthy. Look at their palatial homes in the Terrace! They have appropriated the pastoral lands until 1948, whilst many of the boys who have been fighting for us and will shortly be repatriated will have nowhere to lay their heads. It is not fair. My suggestion is that these shepherd princes should provide money for repatriation. Let them be taxed so that we may repurchase properties for the repatriation of our men.

Hon. J. E. Dodd: They made 30 millions out of the war.

Hon. J. MILLS: A great deal of land close to some of our railways and close to some of the ports could be repurchased. Just inland from Carnarvon and along the Cue railway there are some of the best pastoral areas in the State, and they are almost entirely held by a few people. In instances of that kind those leases should be compulsorily purchased if necessary and cut up and distributed amongst the soldiers. If they were cut up into 20,000-acre blocks we would be able to establish people on what would be comfortable livings and they would never look back. There is no pastoral land available now. What is the use of sending a soldier 200 miles away from a railway where he would be faced with enormous transport difficulties and then give him a capital of only £500. The idea would be absurd. We should acquire all the areas we need in close proximity to railways and make the squatter provide the money. Over 600 farmers who are under the Industries Assistance Board have abandoned their holdings. In 1914 many of them were known to me as honest settlers. They had a few hundred pounds capital and they all became involved with the board or the bank, and when the call of country came, many of them left to fight for us and some will never return. Those who will return, however, and who desire to go back to their holdings should be protected against their creditors. Whilst they were clients of the bank, the Postponement of Debts Act applied. But now it will not do so, I understand, when they come back to civil life, so far as they are dissociated from the board. It is my intention to move an amendment when

the Bill is in Committee. There may be some exception taken to it, but there are scores and hundreds of men who deserve this protection. They should not come back here in financial chains. They deserve every liberty they can get. My proposed amendment is—

Every Australian soldier who has served overseas and who at the time of his enlistment was either bankrupt or insolvent shall on his return automatically become discharged from debts contracted by him prior to enlistment, subject to his filing a statement of all his liabilities so incurred with the Official Receiver in Bankruptcy, verified by a statutory declaration.

I am pleased to hear the Colonial Secretary say that the Government do not feel they are absolved from any duty of re-establishing these men, apart altogether from the land. The Government can do a great deal, and it is necessary that these men should have sympathetic help from everyone. I have no desire to be critical in my remarks, and would much rather give a little constructive help if possible. With these few words, I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan) [8.17]: I am pleased that the hon. member who has just sat down rose a few moments before I did, because it gives me an opportunity of congratulating him upon the speech he has just made. I attach a great deal of importance to his remarks, because he is speaking on a subject which he knows thoroughly from many years of experience. I do not agree with everything he has said, but it is pleasing for me to find that there is at least one member in this House who believes that the pastoralists should have a tenure of their leases on the system of payment by results. For a considerable time past, as hon. members may be aware, I have urged that pastoral rents should be based, not upon the area but upon the stock which feeds upon that country. I am very pleased to find that the hon. member is of that opinion, too, only he goes somewhat further. He goes no further in this direction, however, than I am prepared to follow him. With regard to the amendment he proposes, in respect of bankruptcy, I fancy it would come better as an amendment to the Bankruptcy Act than as an amendment to this Bill. I urge the hon. member to think that over. There is no hurry for it to be put into operation, and if he thinks the matter over he will probably realise that it is better to move this as an amendment to the Bankruptcy Act than as an amendment to this Bill, although it has a good deal to do with settling up. This Bill is an attempt, and I think a good one, on the part of the Government to deal with one of the most complex subjects and difficult problems which not only this country but, I venture to say, the world, has ever seen, to provide on their return for the immense numbers of fighting men who have gone away, and established as great a claim on the country of their birth or residence as any man could establish without unduly disturbing or dislocating the machinery of the community,

which has arisen during their absence. It is indeed a most difficult problem, and one which will tax the brains of the community in every country to efficiently cope with. The State, in relation to our own soldiers, can only go a very short distance, as the Colonial Secretary has pointed out in the extremely informative and perhaps I might say optimistic speech which he delivered in introducing this Bill. Most of the subjects which have to be dealt with lie outside the province of the State, lie in the direction wherein the State can only help indirectly instead of being, so to speak, the prime mover. The State, however, can do a great deal. In this Bill the State is making a good attempt, and I hope it will be a successful one, to deal with the problem of those soldiers who wish to go upon the land. I would, however, deprecate in the strongest possible manner any attempt to introduce, what I might term artificiality into our repatriation scheme; any attempt, so to speak, to force into the hands of these returned soldiers any cards which they do not want. Hon. members know what forcing a card is, and will understand what I mean. I hope that neither this Government, nor the Commonwealth Government, nor the Government of any State, will endeavour to induce men to take up occupations for which they have perhaps an inclination, but for which they are not fitted. The crux of this Bill, or indeed of any Bill dealing with repatriation on the land, especially in this or any other of the States of the Commonwealth, lies in the personality of the boards or other bodies who are called upon to administer them. I do not agree with Mr. Cornell when he says that this Parliament should endeavour to classify the scores of different varieties of men to be dealt with. Every man has a personal equation. Each applicant for land, or indeed under any repatriation scheme, has his individuality or personality, and it is only by the appointment of an extremely efficient board that this characteristic of the man can be dealt with. I hope when the board is being appointed the Government will use every means in their power to get men on it of wide and varied experience, men who have a knowledge of the subject that they are likely to be called upon to deal with, and men, above all, who have a knowledge of human nature. The man I would personally, after many years association with him in many respects, look upon as an ideal member of such board, if his other multifarious duties, which are being added to by successive Governments, do not preclude him from serving on that board, is the manager of the Agricultural Bank, Mr. William Paterson. That gentleman has a knowledge of land and a knowledge of human nature which are absolutely essential to the successful carrying out of these duties.

Hon. J. E. Dodd: If he could give his personal attention to the work.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: Quite so. But the members of the board have to give personal attention to every individual and to every case they are confronted with. It is the individuality of the man which matters a great deal more than anything else. When the

affairs of the Agricultural Bank were within the grip of the man of whom I speak, the bank made absolutely no losses. But later on, through one cause and another, chiefly owing to the unjustifiable boom in Western Australian lands, the affairs of the bank became such that we began to arrive at a position which perhaps was not altogether desirable.

Hon. J. E. Dodd: I admit that he is a good man.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: I am dealing with the gentleman only from the point of view of his knowledge of human nature, his ability to size up a man after an interview, and sum up his possibilities and capabilities. Therein lies the crux of the position so far as this board is concerned. The Colonial Secretary was quite right when he said that the most efficient form by which assistance could be given in the way of repatriation was by the creation and stimulation of industries. He drew a picture of soldiers coming back to the land wherein they would not need help, but that picture, unfortunately, does not find its prototype at present in Western Australia or in any part of Australia. I doubt if there is any part of the world which affords the roseate hues to the returned soldier which the hon. member has imparted to the ideal land of which he spoke. If we are to stimulate industries in Western Australia and to encourage new industries, then we will have to act in a very different manner from that in which we have been doing. The Government must withdraw from the unfair and inefficient competition with industries such as they are engaging in. We will have to leave to private individuals or co-operative societies that participation in the small industries which have, after all, to be the backbone of the State, such as bacon factories, and jam factories and other things with which the Government are burning their fingers from day to day. If we are going to encourage these industries, and if they are going to live upon what I may call a natural basis—and we can leave to competition amongst themselves the adjustment of prices, for the public will see to that—then the Government will have to carry out the promise they made to this country, that they would diminish instead of increase these State industries.

Hon. J. Cunningham: It has taken private enterprise a long time to get to work.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: It will take them a great deal longer, so long as they do not know the day when they are to be wiped out of existence, owing to the unfair State competition.

Hon. J. Cunningham: They must have been asleep for many years in the past.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: I have listened with a great deal of approval to Sir Edward Wittenoom's suggestion regarding probationary farms. It is a wise project, and I hope will be carried into effect. It is just as well to allow these men, who have always looked upon farming operations as one of the easiest and most certain ways of making a living which can be thought of to find out for them-

selves that the project is not quite so easy as they thought it was. The establishment of probationary farms will certainly do a great deal of good in a positive direction and undoubtedly a great deal of good in a negative direction, by trying out the fitness of the men for the pursuit in which they wish to engage. If we approximated our land laws a little more to our mining laws I think a great deal of help would accrue to this repatriation scheme. Some years ago I was provided under the Mining Act that where a man wished to get exemption on a mine, and wished to leave the natural richness which he had come into possession of untouched, he must let tributors on the mine, the tributors to be fixed at a fair rate of royalty. There has been for a good many years in this State a system of what I may call private tributating in farming. I know good many men who have done a great deal for their own good, and for the good of the community, by a means of share farming. It has been, as I have already said, a good thing not alone for the person who owns the land, but a good thing even for those who carried out the share farming. It might be possible to introduce legislation which would provide that where men are not making the best use of their land they should be induced by fair means to allow persons to come in and farm on shares.

Hon. J. Cunningham: We should take it away from them.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: I do not agree with the hon. member altogether, because after all in many cases these men have shown their quality, which I recognise the hon. member and his friends do not take any notice of or do not give any merit to. Many men have taken up land and put their money into it and they should receive a certain amount of protection. If they have not made the best use of the land, means should be taken whereby the best use should be made of it for themselves. If it redounds to their good as well as to the good of the community that such means should be taken, that is better for all parties concerned. I do not think that when the best use is not being made of land a system of compulsory share farming should be introduced, which would be a very good thing, and allow a considerable outlet for the employment of returned soldiers, without necessitating a very great deal of outlay. I do not know if the Government have been told of this scheme, but if not I have very much pleasure in presenting my ideas to them.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: What do you mean by compulsory share farming?

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: The land is now given to anyone to lie idle. A board should be appointed to say what use should be made of the land and if the owner is not satisfied to make that use of it, he should enter into an arrangement with persons who are willing to do so. A very great number of people, including some personal friends of mine, have largely increased the value of their property and given employment to a large number of men by putting this share farming into operation.



tion. It is share farming that made France the possessor of the wealthiest, best, and most industrious peasantry in the world.

Hon. J. Ewing: Was that compulsory?

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: No. They had the sense to see what good would result from group farming. I share the doubts of Sir Edward Wittenoom as to how it will recommend itself to the Australian temperament. When I think of group farming I cannot help thinking of that fiasco of Mr. Lane, the new Australia, which was the largest and most extensive experiment on the world's surface. But, as the hon. member said, group farming has been carried into effect with success in France and Germany, but he left out the best example, namely, Russia, where the Mir system has resulted in the opening up of a great part of Siberia. The Russian Government endeavoured to make good citizens out of very bad ones by shifting without very much preliminary legal process, the most undesirable inhabitants of towns and villages into places in Siberia where it was a case of root hog or die. It was a case of struggling against adversity, which has turned out a good thing for Siberia. Before Russia was disrupted, at all events, one would say that they had built up in Southern Siberia one of the biggest dairying industries in the world, which was threatening to come into severe competition with other Continental countries such as Denmark. If it can be done in other countries, there seems no reason why it cannot be done here, but I doubt whether the Australian temperament will accept it. Each Australian rightly thinks that he is built in his own mould, and it is to that independence of character and that conviction that he is as good as the next man and, as the Irishman said, "better, too," that the fighting qualities of the Australian are due. The Bill has my most hearty support. The only two points I wish to urge upon this or any Government in relation to repatriation are, firstly, that anything tending towards artificiality should be most strongly avoided, and secondly, that the crux of the whole position and its success or non-success hinges upon the judicious appointment of the board under which repatriation is to take place.

Hon. R. J. LYNN (West) [8.35]: I have listened with pleasure to the leader of the House in introducing this Bill and regret very much the lateness of the session at which it has been introduced. I think the measure should certainly have been introduced many months ago, and it is indeed unfortunate that it should be introduced at such a late hour in the session. I was very pleased indeed to take down the statistics quoted by him respecting the percentage of men settled in this State as against the percentages in other States. In view of the percentage settled at no expense to the State, I think it reflects some credit upon the Government. I also heard recently of certain returned soldiers having been given the opportunity of attending one of those probationary farms in order to qualify for land settlement, at Brunswick, and in view of that, and in view of what has been said by a sec-

ment having done nothing in this direction, it is to my mind, very satisfactory, when you take into consideration the percentages quoted by the Colonial Secretary. I think we are all agreed that nothing could be considered too great—not only by the Commonwealth, but by a State like Western Australia, which has such a proud record in connection with the war—for men who left our own State, and although Mr. Mills has suggested some amendment to the Bill, I regret very much that there has been no movement between the State and the Commonwealth in order to introduce a comprehensive measure of repatriation for this State. Under this Bill, which is styled an Act to provide for the settlement of discharged soldiers, provision is made for the men who desire to go on the land, and I realise the great value attached to the settlement of men on our land. But in the absence of any other provision being made by the State and the Commonwealth combined for the men who have no desire to go on the land, I fear that this might possibly be an inducement—because it is the only Act we have in this State—to force some men on the land in order to obtain, possibly, what they may consider some advantage, although they may be unsuited to that particular calling. If that were so it would be disastrous, not only to the individual soldier, but to the Government as well, and it appears to me that unless we have some other measure that will offer some inducement as against this particular Bill, then we will have considerable dissatisfaction in this State. Let me quote one instance. Take two men leaving this State to go overseas. One has been working hard for many years and has accumulated a little money, and before going away borrowed money in order to discharge his total liabilities, and he leaves with a mortgage on his property. He might have land to the value of £2,000 which he has just cleared up by borrowing money, and the mortgage remains on the property. Another man who left with him has similar property from the point of view of value, but has not put in, perhaps, half the work or time that the other man did on his holding. He goes away and has a £1,000 debt on it. I take it that under the Bill the Government will immediately release him from further payments and give him the land at one half the value at which it was purchased. He obtains practically a gift of £1,000 and the other man still has the mortgage on his property. I take it that such instances will cause considerable dissatisfaction unless we are in a position to do the same for the man with the mortgage as we propose to do with the man who has the Government liability on his property. If Mr. Mills is right in saying that by offering the returned man a 50 per cent. reduction on the land values, he will only be paying the real value of the land, then we will be offering him nothing.

Hon. J. Mills: That is so.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: To my mind I do not doubt that in some instances land may be overvalued, but in other cases, there must be

if Mr. Mills suggested his second amendment just after the outbreak of war, it would have been one of the best inducements for men to enlist. The point I want to get at is this: Will this land settlement clause induce a class of returned man to go on the land that is absolutely unsuited for the life? I take it that by this inducement we as a State are really subsidising the returned man to the value of at least 50 per cent. of the land we offer him. If we are not doing that, but simply asking the man to go on the land by the offer of 50 per cent. reduction of a non-existent value, then we are guilty of a subterfuge and doing something that is utterly wrong. But I do not believe that. I believe that the inducement offered under the Bill is worthy of the intentions and of the sympathies of the Government. But whilst we are in a position to offer this inducement under the Bill, we are not in a position to offer any inducement to the returned soldier who is not prepared to follow the calling of agriculture. On the coast we have a fishing industry and also pearl fishing. If we offer this valuable inducement to land settlement—if there is no valuable inducement, of course my argument fails—why should we not offer a similar inducement to returned soldiers willing to engage in the fishing industry or in pearl fishing? Those two industries would absorb many returned soldiers, and why not subsidise returned soldiers prepared to enter upon them? Unless we as a State are willing to do something for the class of returned soldier unable to go on the land, or unwilling because of unsuitableness to go on the land, I fear we shall have a great deal of dissatisfaction in Western Australia. I hope for an assurance from the leader of the House that in the near future some attempt will be made to assist returned soldiers in directions other than that of land settlement. The leader of the House remarked on the fact that Senator Millen has not yet visited this State in connection with repatriation. I regret it very much indeed. If there is one State in the Commonwealth that requires stimulating it is Western Australia. I am afraid we have not had that sympathetic administration from the East to which we are entitled; and I hope the Government will put up a protest in that connection.

Hon. J. Cornell: Let us take up arms.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: I think it would be a fine thing for this State if we sent the painter and had separation; and any agitation in that direction by tongue, pen, or sword, I shall be glad to co-operate in. I am anxious that the leader of the House should consider the suggestions I have offered, and inform us what the State, in conjunction with the Commonwealth, proposes to do for the returned men generally. The returned soldier who is for one reason or another not willing to go on the land has done more for the Empire than most of us here have done. If the clause providing for the 50 per cent. reduction is a bona fide clause—which I do not doubt—then the Government must concede similar privileges to returned soldiers desirous of following

other avocations than the agricultural and pastoral. The Bill has my hearty support. I am quite in accord with the leader of the House that we cannot do too much for the returned soldiers; indeed, we shall never be in a position to do what we should for them—the men who saved our State and the British Empire. There is only one clause on which I desire to speak particularly. I agree with the remarks of Mr. Cornell and Mr. Kingsmill regarding the board, but that is a matter of detail. Clause 3, however, makes no provision for the soldier who has served the Empire in previous wars. I think there are cases of such soldiers in our State, soldiers with honourable discharges who are anxious to go upon the land under the conditions of the Bill. I know of one such case—a man who has served in two or three wars, and who enlisted for this war and went into camp but was turned down as medically unfit. Such cases of soldiers with honourable discharges should, I think, be included within the scope of this measure; and I hope the Colonial Secretary will be good enough to consider that matter. I have pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill.

On motion by Hon. J. E. Dodd debate adjourned.

#### BILL—NAVIGATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

#### BILLS (10)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Government Railways Act Amendment.
  - 2, Postponement of Debts Act Continuation.
  - 3, Roads Act Continuation.
  - 4, Industries Assistance Act Continuation.
  - 5, Sale of Liquor Regulation Act Continuation.
  - 6, Licensing Act Amendment Continuance.
  - 7, Dividend Duties Act Amendment.
  - 8, Treasury Bonds Deficiency.
  - 9, Income Tax.
  - 10, Government Tramways Act Amendment.
- Received from the Assembly.

#### BILL—AGRICULTURAL LANDS PURCHASE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [9.3] in moving the second reading said: I do not think it is necessary to preface this Bill with any preliminary remarks. Its objects are largely the same as the objects of the Bill previously introduced dealing with the settlement of discharged soldiers on the land. This Bill simply deals with another phase of the question. Its chief features are amendments of the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act in order to provide for the compulsory purchase of land in certain conditions and also to make easier the conditions of re-sale for the returned soldier. It may be of interest if I put before the House the different methods of compulsory acquisi-

tion of the land in force at present in different States of the Commonwealth and in New Zealand. In Queensland, land can be acquired for the purpose of closer settlement either by agreement or compulsorily. The compulsory provisions apply only when the land exceeds £20,000 in value, exclusive of improvements. When the Minister intends to acquire land he gives notice in the "Gazette." The owner has the right to retain, in one block out of the estate, for the purpose of residence or business, land the value of which, exclusive of improvements, does not exceed £10,000; or £15,000 where the unimproved value of the estate exceeds £50,000; or £20,000 where the unimproved value exceeds £100,000. If the owner exercises the right to retain the land, the Minister may require him to retain the homestead and other buildings. Claims for compensation are determined by the Land Appeal Court, which consists of a district court judge and two members of the land court. In determining the compensation the court must have regard only to the value of the land, including all improvements and buildings, and the loss (if any) to business and stock resulting directly and reasonably in consequence of the acquisition. In Victoria, land may be acquired for closer settlement either by agreement or compulsorily. Where an offer to purchase any estate has been made by the Crown, and the owner has not accepted the offer within the time specified, then a resolution of both Houses of Parliament may be passed directing that the whole or any part of the land comprising such estate may be acquired by the board by compulsory process. Within 15 days of the service of the notice on the owner, he has the right to select and retain out of the estate for the purpose of residence or business land the unimproved value of which does not exceed £6,000, unless the judge, by whom the claim for compensation is fixed, determines a larger sum than £6,000 but not exceeding £10,000. If the board requires less than the whole of the estate, the owner has the right to require that the whole of the estate shall be taken. In determining compensation, regard shall be had to the following:—(a) Value of the land acquired and of all buildings and improvements thereon. (b) Damage caused by severance. (c) Enhancement or depreciation of other land adjoining the land taken or severed. Further, in determining the compensation the valuation of the land made by assessors and set forth in the valuation Register under the Land Tax Act may be taken into consideration. A disputed claim for compensation may be determined (a) by agreement, (b) by the owner making a claim for compensation before a judge without jury or assessors, or (c) on the application of the board by a proceeding before a judge without jury or assessors. In New Zealand, land for closer settlement may be taken either by agreement or compulsorily under the Lands for Settlement Act. If land is required and the owner refuses to sell or exchange, it may be taken compulsorily. The right to take land compulsorily is subject to the following limitations:—(a) The

estate shall not be taken in whole or in part unless its total area is not less than the prescribed maximum of first, second or third class land. (b) If the estate contains not less than the prescribed maximum, the owner has the right to select and retain out of the whole estate, any area not exceeding the prescribed maximum. The prescribed maximum, where land is situated more than five miles from the cities of Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, or Dunedin, means 1,000 acres of first class land, or 2,000 acres of second class land, with a site for a homestead, or 5,000 acres of third class land with a site for a homestead. (c) If the land proposed to be taken comprises less than the whole estate, the owner has the right to require that the whole estate shall be taken. Claims for compensation shall be determined as provided by the Public Works Act, 1908, under which, where claims exceed £1,000, they can be either heard before a judge of the Supreme Court or before a judge of a district court, or a magistrate who may preside at the court instead of a judge of the Supreme Court. With the owner's consent, the claim may be heard and determined by one person. In determining the compensation, the court shall have regard only to the value of the land, and the loss to the owner's business by the taking of the land. The compensation must be separately assessed in respect to the unimproved value of the land to be taken and in respect to the improvements. The unimproved value of the land is to be taken as the amount at which the unimproved value is assessed in the district valuation roll under the Valuation of Land Act, 1908. There shall be added to the total amount payable in respect of the unimproved value of the land a further sum calculated as follows:—(a) If the amount does not exceed £50,000, 10 per cent., (b) If the amount exceeds £50,000, 10 per cent. in respect of £50,000 and five per cent. in respect to the residue. The total compensation shall be increased by two per cent. by way of compensation for the compulsorily taking of the land, and by way of compensation for any loss or injury that may be suffered in consequence of such taking, whether in respect of the land so taken or in any other respect. Under the Valuation of Land Act (No. 203) a Valuer-General is appointed with district valuers and other officers. A district valuation roll is prepared for each district giving, inter alia—(a) The nature and value of the improvements on the land, (b) The unimproved value of the land, (c) The capital value of the land. The roll may be revised from time to time. Provision is made for appeal by the owner with regard to the valuation put upon the land. The valuations on the district roll must be used by every local authority rating on the capital or unimproved value of the land. These values are also adopted under the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act, Stamp Duties Act, and duties under the Death Duties Act, and are adopted by various Government departments. If the Valuer-General is of the opinion that any land has been fixed by the assessment court at less than its capital requires the owner to consent to the capital

value being fixed at a sum specified in the notice, and that failing such consent being given within 30 days the Valuer-General may recommend the Governor to acquire the land. Provision is also made that the owner of any estate may give notice to the Valuer-General that he requires the unimproved value of the land as shown in the roll increased, and the Valuer-General must increase it accordingly. Those, briefly, are the conditions under which land may be compulsorily acquired in New Zealand, in Queensland, and in Victoria. The provisions of the Bill now before the House are entirely different from those of New Zealand, but they do follow to some extent on the lines of those in the other States I have referred to, except that the Bill goes a great deal farther than the Queensland measure and farther even than the Victorian Act, in that it allows the Government compulsorily to acquire very much less valuable areas than is the case in those two States. To take the Bill clause by clause: the amendment in Clause 3 is rendered necessary by the fact that money cannot be borrowed at four per cent. now. The alteration of 25 years to 40 years is necessary because by Section 9 payments by a soldier may extend over 40 years. In Clause 4 provision is made to increase the number of members of the board to seven instead of five as at present. The Bill proposes to increase the number to seven, but it is my intention when in Committee to further amend that provision and make the number nine, and to fix the quorum at three, except in special cases. The object of this is to enable two or possibly three groups of three members each to inspect simultaneously two or three properties in different parts of the State, and to enable the quorum of the board to be obtained expeditiously. Most of the members have private or public business to attend to, and it is therefore difficult to fix a date of meeting to suit all members. The increased number is also intended to avoid expense, as members resident in different districts may be requested to report on land in their respective districts. It is thought that, by means of the larger board appointed from a wider area, no matter in what portion of the State it is desired to acquire land, you will be able to get a board together of men who are more or less conversant with the conditions in that particular district. Regarding Clause 5, paragraphs (b), (d), and (e) of Section 7 of the principal Act read as follows—

(b) The demand for land in the neighbourhood for agricultural settlement.

(d) The probability of the immediate selection of the land.

(e) The absence of a sufficient quantity of Crown lands in the neighbourhood available for agricultural settlement.

With reference to paragraph (b), there may be no demand for land in the neighbourhood. In the near future, soldiers will supply the demand, or in other cases the policy of the Government might be to bring settlers in from elsewhere. Regarding paragraph (d), the board may not be aware of the policy of the Government, which may wish to look ahead and provide land in advance of settle-

ment. As to paragraph (e), there may be ample Crown land in a neighbourhood, but the Government may deem it better to buy partly improved private land. The Government wish the board to act principally as experts on the value and suitability of the land, and it is considered that the Government should take the responsibility of deciding the matters referred to in paragraphs (b), (d), and (e). The amendment in Clause 6 is consequential on that in Clause 5. In Clause 7 a surrender takes place when the land is voluntarily sold, but under this Act land may be compulsorily acquired, and it is necessary to have these words inserted. Clause 8 is of an exactly similar nature. Clause 9 is intended to give relief to ordinary purchasers of estates, and Subclause (b) is intended to give specially easy terms to soldiers. Clause 9, Subclause 3, is to give relief to purchasers of portions of estates who find themselves in difficulties owing to the war, bad seasons, etc. Estates purchased prior to 1909 are exempted, as it is not considered necessary in those cases. These estates were similarly excluded in the Agricultural Lands Purchase Amendment Act 1917. Clause 10 as originally drafted provided for interest to be one per cent. in excess of that paid on the money applied to the acquisition of the land. In the Assembly it was considered undesirable that the discharged soldier should be called upon to pay that extra one per cent. An amendment was inserted accordingly, and while I do not propose to do anything to disturb the amendment, I intend to make a slight amendment to this clause to make it clear that that abatement is for the discharged soldier only. Clause 12 is the most important in the Bill. It relates to the compulsory acquisition of land for the settlement of discharged soldiers or their dependants under the provisions of the Discharged Soldier Settlement Act, 1918. The land can only be acquired for that purpose, for the settlement of soldiers. As the Bill was originally introduced, the provision read—

Provided that the compulsory provisions of this Act shall only apply where the private land proposed to be acquired exceeded £10,000 in value exclusive of improvements.

But in the Assembly the amount of £10,000 was amended to £5,000. The discussion in the Assembly was very interesting, and I have no doubt there is some force in the contention that if the powers of the Government were confined to acquiring land of which the unimproved value was £10,000, they would be very limited, and would touch only a small number of properties. An amendment may also be required to provide that if it is necessary for the better and more economical subdivision of Crown land, or land acquired under this Act, to acquire adjoining private land, it may, failing agreement, be compulsorily acquired. But that is a point I intend to leave to the Committee stage. Clauses 13, 14, and 15 simply set out the method of procedure for compulsorily acquiring land. In Clause 11 there is a provision which is somewhat inconsistent with the Bill as it left the Assembly. As I have already stated, in Clause 12 it was provided that the compulsory provisions of

the Act could only obtain where the unimproved value exceeded £10,000. Provision is made in Clause 16 that the owner of an estate in possession, the whole of which is proposed to be taken compulsorily, shall have the right to retain one block out of the estate for the purpose of residence or business land, the value of which, after taking into account any improvements thereon, does not exceed £5,000. The point to which I wish to direct attention is that £5,000 is inconsistent now that £5,000 is included in Clause 12, and it will be necessary to make an amendment consequential to that in Clause 12. The remaining clauses only contain machinery for carrying into effect the compulsory clauses. I have no doubt that the Bill generally will be regarded as of a somewhat controversial nature. It is a new departure, but it is the practice of most of the other States of the Commonwealth, and when we remember that land can be only compulsorily acquired for the purpose of settling discharged soldiers, and can only be acquired where the unimproved value exceeds £5,000, and that the method of acquiring is such as to ensure that the owner shall get a fair and reasonable price for his property, I do not know that any reasonable objection can be taken. I beg to move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. J. W. Kirwan, debate adjourned.

[The Deputy President took the Chair.]

#### BILL—CHURCH OF ENGLAND DIOCESAN TRUSTEES AND LANDS.

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [9.25] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is one that I do not think is likely to excite much comment. It has been before the Government for some considerable time, and has received extensive consideration at the hands of the Crown Law Department and the people interested. The Diocesan trustees were originally incorporated by Act of Parliament, and the Roman Catholic Church, the Congregationalists, the Presbyterians, and the Wesleyan Methodists are all incorporated by separate Acts of Parliament. When, however, the Diocese of Bunbury and the Diocese of Kalgoorlie were constituted, the Associations Incorporation Act, 1895, was availed of, and they were incorporated under that Act. It is very doubtful, however, whether the Associations Incorporation Act was ever intended to authorise the incorporation under its provisions of Dioceses of the Church of England as separate Dioceses, and the object of this Bill is to put the Diocese of Bunbury and the Diocese of Kalgoorlie on a legal footing, and also to incorporate the Northern Diocese. So far as the Bill amends the Church Lands Act, I do not think any exception could be taken to the provisions. No powers are conferred, so far as I am aware, which will not be found in the Acts

relating to the Roman Catholic and other churches.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etcetera.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

#### BILL—VERMIN.

Assembly's Message.

The Council having made certain amendments in the Bill to which the Assembly did not agree the reasons for such disagreement were now considered.

In Committee, etcetera.

Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair; the Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister) in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: An amendment was agreed to by the Legislative Council to insert the following clause, to stand as No. 2:—"This Act shall apply to the South-West Division of the State, except such portion thereof as is situated northward of the Government fence running westward to Bluff Point, but shall not apply to any other part of the State." The Assembly's reason for disagreeing with the amendment was as follows:—"It is unwise and unjust to make discriminations between one portion of the State and another in the application of provisions national in their scope."

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): Objection was taken to the amendment in another place on account of the fact that the fencing in of the waters in the northern portion of the State could not be carried out with any degree of success. In the northern parts there are large rivers and bores which it would be impossible to fence. On that account the Assembly disagreed with the amendment sent forward by the Council. It is my intention to submit a modification of the amendment and I, therefore, move—

That the following be added as a proviso to Clause 41:—"Provided also that this section shall apply to the South-West division except such portion thereof as is situated northward of the Government fence running westward from Bluff Point but shall not apply to any other part of the State."

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I do not think the Honorary Minister is correct when he states that the reason why another place disagreed with the amendment was on account of the difficulty of fencing in the water supplies only. I have no hesitation in saying that the reason why the amendment was not agreed to in another place was because of the fact that hon. members did not understand it. I have that from at least a dozen members. This Bill deals with the South-Western division and if it were made clear that the existing legislation remains in force a different attitude would be taken in another place.

It is unwise and unjust to discriminate between one portion of the State and another. The Bill discriminates between the North and the South. Under the Bill, in the South we have to pay half the road board rate, while in the North we have to pay 10s. per thousand. A holder of a million acres in the northern portion of the State would have to pay under this Bill a vermin tax of £500, but if he were brought under the same provisions in the South-West he would only pay £50.

Hon. H. CARSON: I regret I was not here when the amendment was before us. It is impossible for the farmer to fence his water against the rabbits if he is going to carry on. How can he water his stock except by opening and shutting gates? I am not in agreement with Mr. Holmes' amendment. I think the amendment which would meet the wishes of members of another place, as well as here, would be one which would apply to the country within the boundaries of Nos. 1 and 2 fencibles, from the Bluff out to Nannine. This would apply to all the south-west division of the State and a little east of the south-west division.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: That is the position.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is discussing the alternative amendment proposed by the Honorary Minister.

Hon. H. CARSON: If the Honorary Minister does not move the amendment I have suggested I shall oppose his, and endeavour to frame one which will meet the wishes of all.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: On a previous occasion I spoke against the proposal introduced by Mr. Holmes. We did not then know exactly what his amendment meant. It was not explained by the Minister in another place, and he may have misled some hon. members there. Many of those who voted against the proposal of this Chamber, however, knew the position. The difficulty has arisen because Mr. Holmes asked too much. Had he included the area within the rabbit-proof fence, between the two fencibles, and also the fence running from the Bluff up to beyond Nannine, that would have included the area between Yalgoo and Nannine, which was excluded by the Bill as it left this Chamber. The boundaries outlined by Mr. Holmes are more or less imaginary ones and leave out a big section of the country within the rabbit-proof fence. That part of the State would be a breeding ground for rabbits, and there would be nothing to prevent them from swarming down into that part of the country brought under the provisions of the Bill. I am prepared to admit that there are conditions in the North to which this Bill could not apply. Before Mr. Holmes' amendment would be accepted by another place he would have to include that big area of country between Yalgoo and Nannine, which is within the rabbit-proof fence. It is quite natural to exclude country outside the fence, but it has not been explained to my satisfaction why the area I have mentioned should be excluded.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I was under the impression that my amendment embraced the

point raised by Mr. Millington. Everything inside the rabbit-proof fence, according to the Solicitor General, was to come within the scope of the Bill, namely, up to the Murchison River or the No. 3 fence, but everything outside that was to be excluded. It is purely a misunderstanding.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Mr. Holmes' explanation about the Bill not being understood in another place is a reflection upon hon. members there. The two following clauses were repealed, and the Bill was made to apply only to one section of the State. My amendment would mean that it would apply to the pastoral areas with the exception of Clause 81, namely, that to do with the fencing in of water.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: How would the Honorary Minister define the responsibility of the owners of holdings representing one or two million acres? He says the only question in dispute is in connection with water supply but there are hundreds of other matters involved in the Bill which could not be satisfactorily applied to the northern areas. Some of the holdings in the North have no boundaries and no boards, and yet the Government could impose the maximum penalty or rate and spend the money on the eradication of rabbits in the South-West. The existing legislation for the North is far more stringent than that for the South.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: The Bill is to a large extent, drafted on the assumption that it would apply to the South-West division. I suggest that progress be reported and the whole matter gone into.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I am agreeable to that course.

[The Deputy Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 9.58 p.m.

## Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 11th December, 1918.

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

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

BILL—LOAN, £780,000.

Introduced by the Colonial Treasurer and read a first time.