

taken out of its hands. The Minister gets the Bill through and goes home and laughs with his Kellerberrin rusties.

[The President resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.34 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 28th October, 1919.

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

QUESTION—FODDER SUPPLIES AND PRICES.

Mr. MALEY asked the Premier: 1, Is he aware that speculators are already purchasing standing crops, or hay in stook or stack, or chaff for forward delivery? 2, Will he ascertain from the Governments of New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia, and publish the information gained, for the protection of local producers—(a) a forecast of the harvest prospects in those States; (b) the estimated deficiency below normal requirements of hay likely to be produced in those States; (c) the true market values from time to time? 3, Will he issue instructions for an immediate compilation of hay production in this State to enable an estimate to be formed of the quantity likely to be available for export above local requirements? 4, What is the approximate shipping freight per ton from Fremantle to Eastern States ports likely to prevail until March next? 5, Will a check be kept on any rise in the price of bran and pollard in this State, owing to drought conditions in the Eastern States?

The PREMIER replied: 1, I know that hay is being purchased in stook. 2, Yes. 3, Yes. 4, This information is not available. 5, Yes.

BILLS (3)—RECOMMENDED BY MESSAGE.

Messages from the Governor received and read recommending appropriation in connection with the following Bills:—

- 1, Perth Mint Act Amendment.
- 2, Government Railways Act Amendment.
- 3, Prices Regulation.

OBITUARY—HON. H. J. SAUNDERS.

Letter in Reply.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received the following letter:—

To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. Dear Sir,—I and my family wish to tender our sincerest thanks to the members of the Legislative Assembly for the resolution passed expressing their deepest sympathy to us in our recent bereavement. Yours faithfully, Julia Saunders. 24th Oct., 1919.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Prices Regulation.
- 2, Road Districts.

Transmitted to the Legislative Council.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1919-20.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from 23rd October; Mr. Piesse in the Chair.

Department of Lands and Surveys; Hon. J. Mitchell, Minister.

Vote—Lands and Surveys, £49,722.

Mr. HARRISON rose to speak.

Hon. P. Collier: Is the member for Avon in charge of these Estimates?

The PREMIER and MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. J. Mitchell—Northam) [4.40]: Do I understand the leader of the Opposition objects to this vote?

Hon. P. Collier: We should have an explanation of it, I think.

The PREMIER: I thought the hon. member was prepared to pass the vote without discussion.

Hon. P. Collier: Give us some information.

The PREMIER: I gave considerable information when I introduced the Budget. If the leader of the Opposition wishes to know why we have increased the vote by £5,000, I may tell him that a great deal of work is being done. Some time ago, a Bill was passed ordering the re-assessment of pastoral leases. In view of that, we have to classify 230 million acres of land, and that work will involve considerable expense. We have two parties out on this work of reclassification, and propose to increase the number if we are able to get suitable men.

Hon. P. Collier: Only two parties in the North-West?

The PREMIER: We had one party and have split it into two, but I wish to carry

out the work more expeditiously. To classify the whole of the area will take a considerable time; probably it will be impossible to do more than 50 million acres a year.

Hon. P. Collier: The parties report to the board; they do not classify the land.

The PREMIER: True, they report to the board, but Mr. Canning, who is in charge of the work, is also a member of the board. This is a very big and important question and we want to do justice to the pastoralists as well as to the State. These gentlemen are carrying on the work at considerable expense to the State, for it is impossible to travel in the North-West for nothing. Apart from that, there is a considerable amount of land settlement. True, the whole of the northern land is withheld from settlement temporarily, except in the case of returned soldiers, but there is a great deal of pastoral land suitable for selection which we hope to make available in the near future.

Hon. P. Collier: It will take years to classify it.

The PREMIER: No; we shall strengthen the staff and do the work more expeditiously. In connection with new applications for pastoral lands, inspections must be made. With two parties, it would take many years to complete the work but we are endeavouring to obtain suitable men, so that it may be completed much sooner. If we are able to obtain suitable men, we should get through the work in a reasonable time. That accounts for a good deal of additional expense. It is found, too, that it is necessary to spend a considerable amount in other parts of the State on surveys, work which must necessarily increase the general expenditure of the department for the year. Naturally some of it will produce revenue, although not as much as we should like, because the amending Act passed in 1918 exempts all payments during the first five years except a percentage of the survey fees. It is not a wise arrangement, but it is the law. Again, there is a considerable amount of work to be done in connection with the survey and inspection of land for the returned soldiers. Some work has been done in the South-West, where we hope to receive numbers of our British friends. At present this work necessitates considerably increased expenditure on these Estimates. Of course, ultimately it will have the effect of greatly increasing the revenue. It is a fortunate thing that there is a revival in land settlement. I believe that during the next year we shall have a largely increased demand for pastoral lands. I hope that when these inspections are complete I shall be able to come to the House and ask for approval to deal with pastoral land in smaller holdings, land adjacent to the South-West division, as for instance in the Southern Cross district and in the Burracoppin district, where the holdings will probably be as small as 5,000 or 10,000 acres. Undoubtedly the present inquiry means money. I believe we should maintain a forward policy in connection with our pastoral lands of the North. This

work of classifying the land should be expedited and, because we ought to know what we have to sell in other parts of the State, I am obliged to ask the House to agree to this slightly increased vote. It will probably save time if I explain now that the amalgamation of the offices of Surveyor General and Under Secretary of Lands has thrown far too much work on the one officer.

Hon. P. Collier: Just what we said at the time. It was a nice piece of business, anyhow.

The PREMIER: It is now seen that it will not work. As a matter of fact, the Surveyor General, if he does his duty throughout the State from north to south, will be a very busy man. The Surveyor General ought to know his State.

Hon. P. Collier: It was an absurd amalgamation.

The PREMIER: Mr. Morris is acting as Under Secretary for Lands, and if necessary the permanent appointment will have to be made.

Mr. O'Loughlen: He has been acting too long. He ought to be further up.

Hon. P. Collier: Is the Surveyor General going to assist in the classification of the North-West?

The PREMIER: I do not know that he can be spared for the work.

Hon. P. Collier: I do not mean that he should carry on the work, but merely that he should see how it is being done.

The PREMIER: Yes, I am afraid he must go up there. He is chairman of the board. He must know the country; it is of the utmost importance that he should be familiar with it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Seeing that you propose to take away half his duties, are you going to reduce the salary by one half?

The PREMIER: I do not think that is a proper question to ask just now. I agree with the leader of the Opposition that there is too much work for one man. It is not only the difficulty of dealing with lands that have been alienated; the Surveyor General is supposed to know the whole country. There is a vast area of land still to be dealt with, and it is the duty of the Surveyor General to learn all there is to be known of the country. I have arranged for him to make trips into country not selected.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Would not he be more useful back in the Mines Department?

The PREMIER: There is a great deal to be done in a very short time, and I hope the Committee will not think that in asking for an additional £5,000 this year I am asking too much. I trust the vote will go through without much opposition.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [4.51]: I consider this department the most important of all. I feel sure that the increase in the vote is fully warranted. A great deal has been and is still being done in regard to land settlement, and it is further necessary that something should be done of a more urgent nature to achieve finality in respect of re-

patriation. We have had complaints from various centres where men have been anxious to get on the land and for months have been unable to do so. I suggest that the Government will find the services of the local repatriation committees of advantage to the department. The chief inspector when going through local districts should communicate with the local committees, and should consult with them before putting in his report. Such consultations would mean for him a better knowledge of the lands submitted to the department for repurchase. He would then be in a position to give a better judgment. Members of local committees have voluntarily offered their services to the department with a view to assisting the returned soldiers, and greater reliance on the local committees would result in acceleration of the repatriation of the returned soldiers. It is delay that kills the desire to go on the land. Many of our returned soldiers have tried to get on certain properties and, failing in that, have sought in other directions. They have been held up and, in consequence, have lost either the seeding period or the growing crop, while the vendor, seeing the prospects of a good harvest, has withdrawn his property from sale. If this sort of thing could be obviated it would be in the best interests of the department and also of the soldier himself. I trust that the Minister controlling the department will look into this question. If these local committees were consulted more frequently and their advice more closely followed regarding the settlement of returned soldiers they would take a more lively interest in them, and would be in a position afterwards to render valuable aid by giving advice upon such matters as the cropping and working of the soil. Much could be done if we could induce the local men to take an interest in the newer settlers in the locality.

The Premier: They are taking an interest in the soldiers now.

Mr. HARRISON: But they ought to take a deeper interest in them. Finality would be more quickly reached if the chief inspector were to communicate with the local committees before sending in his reports.

The Premier: He makes every possible inquiry now.

Mr. HARRISON: I admit that the department has done good service in trying to see that the men are not over-loaded by financial problems on properties where they could not make good. It has been the view of the department that the returned soldier should not take an impossible proposition, but there have been cases where a settler not knowing the country could get considerable assistance from the local committee. For want of this many men who would prefer to be on the land are to-day working for wages. We have frequently heard reference in the House to land adjacent to the railways not being properly worked. Members of the Opposition when making such references should specify the areas so

that we might know where the lands are situated. Through my electorate and others of which I have a personal knowledge all the unproductive land adjacent to railways is of a class that could not be profitably used because it has not a sufficient percentage of first-class or second-class country. In regard to sand-plain and other inferior land through which the railways pass, I think they could be brought into earlier use if the adjoining farmers were allowed to take up those lands under improvement conditions with a view to preparing them for stock. It would be good for the State and good for the farmers concerned. The Minister could have those lands surveyed, divided up and allotted to adjoining settlers who would have first opportunity of selecting up to 1,000 or more acres under improvement conditions. If those sandplains were so utilised, I feel certain that all the lands adjacent to existing railways would be quickly occupied. They could be simply and inexpensively worked. Suppose we have a 1,000 acre block and 100 acres of cultivation in 10-acre blocks distributed, and those blocks are seeded with oats, fertilised well, and allowed to ripen before stock is put in, I am convinced the sheep would distribute certain grass seeds throughout the balance of the area; and year after year that area would grow further food products, and eventually the land would have a much larger stock carrying capacity, without a further burden of overhead charges. I should be glad if the Minister would take a note of that point. Another matter which has been neglected in the agricultural areas is the afforestation of farms. We have killed in a face the whole of the heavy timber, and the result has been to increase the velocity of the wind over those areas. I am persuaded that as a result of that increased wind velocity the rain clouds pass over the land more quickly, with the result that the farming areas do not obtain as heavy a rainfall as they would have enjoyed had belts of timber been allowed to remain. Such timber would act not only as a breakwind, but would help to shelter stock. Moreover, the clearing away of the dead timber would make a splendid fire break. Further, there would be useful timber for farm construction work, and also firewood for a number of years. As regards any country still unalienated in our eastern wheat belt, it would be wise to provide that a belt of timber should be left on the west and on the north of each holding, after a width of one chain has been cleared on the lines of fencing. I feel certain every member of the Committee is convinced that cereal growing without stock is not going to be of any great use to the State.

The Premier: No one has ever suggested that one could be done without the other.

Mr. HARRISON: I say everybody in the Chamber agrees to that. The farmers in the wheat areas, however, have not been in a position to carry stock; and that chiefly for two reasons. One reason is that since

the areas have been cleared and the cereals grown—that is, within the last 10 years—there have been droughts. The second reason is that owing to the war fencing wire has been unobtainable. Further, there has been a lack of security as regards water supply. A wealth of grass comes up in the various timber areas in the course of four years after the trees have been killed. I wish to refer to that aspect of the matter more particularly because members of Parliament on their recent trip saw for themselves the vast wealth of grass that from year to year is lost to the individual farmers and to the State owing to the lack of the facilities to which I have alluded. In a speech I made some little time after that trip, I estimated that the State loses at least £300,000 per annum through not being able to take advantage of what nature provides. That estimate is a low one. It is not right that the Government, for want of railway facilities and of larger water conservation, should allow that waste to go on. Practically, the wealth I allude to is blown away by the winds. On a recent evening we heard remarks about the position of labour on our farm lands. The member for North-East Fremantle read a number of letters referring to wages offered. Those letters may be perfectly correct. It may be that inexperienced immigrants were offered those low rates of wages. But they would not remain on those wages for longer than a few months. A man without knowledge of clearing land is found food and accommodation while gaining experience, and he will not be long before he obtains better terms, either on the place where he is gaining experience, or on a neighbouring farm. A number of men of the class referred to by the member for North-East Fremantle have made good in the Totadjin area, where they have taken up land for themselves. They are now some of our best farmers. Reference was also made to the employment of boys on farms. The very page of the Estimates on which that discussion arose show that we have in our departmental offices messengers receiving £42 per annum. I ask which is better off, the boy learning farming and receiving from 10s. or 15s. up to £2 per week, or the messenger boy in the city earning £42 a year? Can a boy provide himself with food and clothing out of £42 a year and have a reserve left? Undoubtedly the boy in the country is in much the better position. There are several increased items in these Estimates.

The Premier: All justified.

Mr. HARRISON: I admit that. There is an increase in Lands and Surveys of £5,000, and in the Agricultural Bank of £4,400. These increases are very small indeed if we are going to provide the land that we ought to make available for settlement. Judging from the number of men, returned soldiers and others, anxious to go on the land to-day, the proposed expenditure will not be nearly enough to enable the Government to cope with land settlement. I am satisfied that no capital can be better spent than that devoted

to increasing our agricultural population. If land settlement does not advance, the cities and towns cannot prosper. I trust that the few remarks I have made regarding water supply, fencing, timber conservation, and working in unison with the repatriation committees will receive consideration.

Mr. GRIFFITHS (York) [5.12]: One of the items coming under this Vote is repatriation, and I wish to bring to the attention of the Minister controlling repatriation a statement made to me by a settler from East Totadjin, which should put the Minister in good heart as regards the settling of returned soldiers on the land. The remark is that in the East Totadjin area there are 300 blocks available with over 600 acres of good land in each 1,000 acres. I wish to refer to the trouble that has occurred in the Harvey areas. It has been pointed out to me that the land reserved for returned soldiers is on high ground, and therefore practically useless for the purpose for which the soldiers have been placed on it. The best part of the Harvey estate is said to be Green Pool paddock, being swamp country about two miles out from Harvey. However, that area is too heavy a proposition for the soldier on a £625 basis. Of the Uduc paddock 800 acres is already settled with returned soldiers. The basis of that settlement is that soldiers taking part of this paddock shall also take part of the Green Pool paddock.

The Premier: How many soldiers have been settled there?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I refer to the matter because I want to find out a little more about these two paddocks. Mr. McLarty has informed me that a returned soldier had intended to reject this land but changed his mind on seeing what he termed a surprising crop of potatoes. According to my advices, however, though a first crop can be grown on the swamp lands, it is very hard indeed to get successive crops. I learn that Dr. Harvey has been there some 11 years—

The Honorary Minister: About 40 years.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I am informed that Dr. Harvey has been engaged for 11 years in trying to bring a patch of lucerne to perfection. The fact of the matter is that the soil has to be built up. Mr. Scott, the irrigation expert, whom we sent to Harvey to act as guide, philosopher, and friend to the returned soldiers, turned that land down until it was drained. I believe the paddocks I refer to have been drained, but the drainage proposition is now penalising the soldier settlers to the extent of £30 per acre. The irrigation rates, when they are under the scheme, come to 17s. 6d. per acre per annum. The drainage having been effected, the position is that the soldier now has to set about a three years' course of continual cultivation with very heavy liming, and lime must be cheap before he can hope to get payable returns. The soldier has been placed upon this unprepared country while suitable land has been allowed to be taken up by other people. There are certain blocks with main

road frontages within a short distance of the town. These were put up for sale, but no proper notice was given in the local press. The only advertisement that was published was in the "Government Gazette," which was only known to the Government employees in the locality, and they notified their friends. There were blocks taken up by Thomas, all of these having main road frontages. This man owns the Canning Bridge hotel, Perth properties, and a big property near Mornington Mills, with but very few improvements upon it, and only a few head of cattle. Then there are Sands's blocks, but he cannot make a payable proposition of them. This man was a caretaker on the homestead for several years, and has a large family of young children. Then there are Eckersley and Byres' blocks. They own orange blocks in the Harvey, and one of them was controller of water distribution for the Government. Sanguinetti has another block or two, and Snell has two blocks. Snell's blocks adjoin his own orchard, which fronts the Harvey railway station. He is one of the most successful growers in Harvey, and is reputed to be a wealthy man. The objection that is raised by returned soldiers is that they are not given a chance of obtaining this land which is so close to the township, and because of that they claim that they have a grievance.

The Premier: Why did you not go to the department?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I have been told certain things there which do not tally with what returned soldiers have told me. I will read the following statement of a returned soldier:—

A large indignation meeting was held in Harvey, protesting against these lands having been opened up for public selection. At this meeting, Mr. W. D. Johnson (late Minister for Lands) outlined the original idea with regard to this land. A telegram was also read, which had been sent by Mr. Millington as from Mr. King, the Under Secretary, stating that "All blocks on Harvey estate not now alienated are to be reserved for returned soldiers, with the exception of homestead, which is too expensive for repatriation purposes." In order to refute the statement that the land is too expensive for returned soldiers, I give the following facts:—1, Very much inferior land, privately owned in 8th street (2½ to three miles from Harvey) partly cleared and fenced, is worth £30 per acre with no access to river. 2, Same land as above, planted and in bearing, is worth from £100 per acre. 3, For 8¼ acres of land overgrown with saplings, situated next to some of the homestead blocks, the owner is asking £75 per acre. 4, Green Pools paddock, at present being selected by returned soldiers, inferior to the homestead, and 2½ miles from Harvey, is being sold to returned soldiers for £10 per acre unimproved. This land will cost at least another £20 before it is as productive as the

homestead land, and will require three or four years' work to bring it to that state. The "Homestead" land is only half a mile from Harvey station, has been grassed down, fenced, and cultivated for many years, is considered by many competent valuers and inspectors to be the best land in the district, and is under the irrigation scheme, the main drain running through the property. Yet, with all its superiority of position and productiveness, it is "too expensive for returned soldiers." I venture to say that the river blocks, if put up to auction for sale as intense culture land, would fetch at least £50 per acre. The lack of publicity in the opening up of this land for selection was one of the worst features. The only advertisement was per medium of the "Government Gazette," thus giving Government employees a previous knowledge, which they and their friends took full advantage of. To prove this, it is only necessary to ask for dates of application and names and occupation of applicants. I know for a fact that the only people (other than Government employees) to be aware of the throwing open for selection of this land were those few to whom this information was given verbally by the said employees.

Upon this matter I think hon. members are entitled to some enlightenment from the Minister.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [5.23]: People have great difficulty in getting land in the South-West because the whole of the Crown lands there are being cut up for repatriation purposes. I had an instance brought under my notice—a very necessitous case—showing that men badly needed a certain area to enable them to do certain things in connection with their property. There was, however, an obstacle put in their way through the land being held up for repatriation purposes. I hope that there will be some development of the Crown lands throughout the South-West. The Government have had power under the old Land Act to give effect to a policy of partially improving the properties throughout the South-West, but for many years nothing of this nature has been carried out. The applications for land for repatriation purposes are mainly for partially improved or improved properties. There is a limit as to what the Government can do in regard to this. It is a foolish policy for the Government to remove one good farmer and replace him by an inexperienced returned soldier. If the Government resumed large areas suitable for establishing five or six returned men with profit to themselves it would be a good thing, but when they take off one good farmer and replace him by an inexperienced settler the policy is a wrong one. It is advisable that the Government should take the earliest opportunity of developing the Crown lands in the South-West that are available for settlement by partially improving them before the settlers are placed upon them.

That is provided for in the Land Act. There is a lot of country in the South-West which at the outset appears to be very indifferent country, but when this land has been properly tested it has often given very good results. I had one case brought under my notice recently of some plain country in the South-West, which was considered entirely valueless. It was tested by a settler who subsequently put down subterranean clover. This man has now got a good dairying proposition. If the Government were to establish small experimental farms in this country, I think it would go far towards creating a sound settlement policy throughout these large areas. To do this efficaciously it would necessitate broadening the principles under which the Agricultural Bank is worked, as applied to the South-West. I see that the Estimates provide for inspectors, the amount involved being £3,729. I assume it is the intention of the Government to develop the South-West by appointing experienced inspectors to assist the new settlers.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It will need more than inspectors to develop the South-West. The country requires the shovel.

Mr. PICKERING: Yes, but unless these settlers are guided by experienced Government officials, a great deal of time and money may be wasted. Money is advanced for purposes of settlement out of the public funds, and this should be carefully guarded so that it be wisely spent. I hope the Minister in charge of the Agricultural Bank will take into consideration the absolute necessity of formulating a broader policy for settlement in the South-West, giving more liberal treatment and a longer period over which the money can be repaid. The Government should do its utmost to settle that portion of the country on sound lines.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [5.27]: It appears to me that everything that is asked for by the farming community is granted, and to-day for the first time we have, virtually speaking, silence from the members of the Country party.

Mr. Maley: We are waiting to hear you.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: We did expect to get some information from those who are supposed to represent the farmers, as to the progress which has been made as a result of the assistance they have had in the past. The member for Avon (Mr. Harrison), who is an out and out individualist, says "Give us a more liberal water supply and provide us with more fencing wire." I do not know whether he wants the Government to provide everything that is necessary for the farmers.

Hon. P. Collier: And more sheep.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: And cattle, too. The hon. member also says, "Introduce extreme socialism so far as we are concerned, and so long as you do it let the others go hang. So long as you give us everything, let us have socialism on our part. We can do nothing for ourselves unless the Government assist us. We depend entirely for the pro-

gress of the farming community upon the assistance the Government may give us."

The Premier: That will depend upon the farmer.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I admit that. We have been going through troublous times in the farming community. During that period the Government came forward with temporary measures of relief for the farmers to tide them over their difficulties. From evidence which we had placed before us recently it is shown that that assistance, given some few years ago, has been beneficial to the country at large.

Mr. Pickering: Is that not satisfactory?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The most prosperous men in the community to-day are the farmers. We also find that the strongest men, those who bring the most pressure to bear upon the Government in order to get more out of the State, are the farmers or the representatives of the farmers.

The Premier: You cannot complain.

Mr. Pickering: Do you not think we are doing well?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Last year we were told definitely that a water supply was the main thing necessary for our future development. We were told to go into the eastern districts, and we were told that if the Minister for Works would give any amount of water at a cheap rate the settlers would be prosperous in the future. The Minister for Works has not done that. Then we were told that a single man could not live as a farmer on 5s. a day. It did not matter whether a single man had to work very much harder on a timber mill at 5s. a day, but he could not live upon his own farm on that amount, where he had his own produce and his own fowls, and other things to assist him in living. The Government went to the assistance of the farmers and gave them what they asked, namely, 9s. a day, the same rate as is being paid to certain Government employees in town. Then we find that it is necessary to keep this thing going, according to the leader of the Country party, to enable the State to progress in the future. I will give way to no one in my desire to render assistance whenever assistance is necessary, but the time is coming when the farming community will have to realise that they must do something to show their independence. I do not believe, and never have believed, that a number of the members who claim to represent the farming community here do actually represent them, because I know a large number of those men, and I know they would feel ashamed if they knew that their representatives in Parliament were continually asking for what might be called charity from the Government. I do not believe those people would countenance such a thing for one moment. They are so satisfied with the position, that we find to-day the eastern districts representatives are pointing out what good land they have in those areas. They say all that it is necessary to do to become prosperous is to scratch the land. Then we listen to the representa-

tives of the South-West. They, too, point out that soldiers can grow prosperous by taking up country in that part of the State. But those who are connected with the land there are the ones who are in a position to know. We know of one member of Parliament who is an old resident of Western Australia, if he was not actually born here, and he has asked the question as to why it is that those men who were bred and born in the south-western part of the State left it to seek fresh fields, if the South-West is as good as we have been told it is. We know that a large number of men from the South-West have done well, but they found it necessary to get out of the South-West before they could make a competence for themselves. Those are the men who to-day are endeavouring as far as possible to dispose to the Government the land which they have been working without any great success. In my opinion it is about time that a Royal Commission was appointed to investigate the manner in which the estates have been repurchased in that part of Western Australia. I would not mind giving my services once again free of cost, for a period of six months, to investigate the condition of affairs which has been existing with regard to the repurchase of estates in the South-West. The files were placed on the Table of the House, but they have been removed. They ought to have been permitted to remain here until the Estimates had been disposed of. If hon. members will refer to those files they will see that the committee appointed to recommend the purchase of estates is what might be called a movable committee. This is the sort of committee it is: if I had been asked to go on it I would perhaps remain off because I was interested in a particular block of land, but I would recommend my friend, Mr. Collier, to take a seat on the committee.

The Premier: I do not think that is the case.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If the Premier reads the files he will know all about it. That is the way things have been going on in the South-West.

Mr. Munsie: No wonder owners have got rid of a lot of estates in the South-West.

Mr. Hickmott: Did the Country party do that?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am not speaking about the Country party. I have not accused them.

Mr. Munsie: No, but the Government did and they are supported by the Country party.

The Premier: That has not been done.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not suppose the Premier has read the files. That was done before the hon. gentleman took control of affairs. It has just been the case of one friend helping another.

The Premier: You cannot prove that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The files show it and the files also show that those committees have used the compulsory purchase clauses and have forced people to sell estates

which those people had no desire to dispose of. I know of one particular instance which was brought under my notice. A man had two or three sons at the Front and he told the committee that he had no desire to part with his land. He wanted to keep it for his sons, who were returning.

The Premier: What is his name?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The committee said to that man, "If you do not sell your land we will take it from you." Then the man quoted what he thought was a prohibitive price and he expected that the committee would turn down his demand.

Mr. Maley: They surely have never threatened to do that?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I have been told so.

Mr. O'Loughlen: And it is absolutely correct.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: This owner asked what he considered was a prohibitive price because he wanted to keep the land. It was purchased by the committee and the result was that the land around that locality was considerably enhanced in value, far in excess of its real value.

The Honorary Minister: The other land was bought first.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Some of it was bought first, not all. The position was that when the sons returned and found that the father's property had been sold, they went to the Lands Department and asked whether it was to be subdivided and if so whether they could take up a portion of it. The Lands Department said, "Yes, we think we can sell it to you." But they asked double the price which the father had received. Naturally the sons had to go elsewhere. This is an example of what is done under the compulsory purchase clause of the Act. Now is the time to bring under notice matters of this description and it is for Ministers to answer the statements which I have made.

The Premier: They are untrue.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: We know well, according to the files, that representation on these committees has become a family affair. I desire to compliment the Premier on having reinstated Mr. John Robinson in his old position. Mr. Robinson will stand no hanky-panky tricks. He was removed because of his honesty in the past. Mr. Robinson always served the Government honestly and straightforwardly while he was a member of the repurchased estates committee and he always saw that the Government received value for the money they paid. Mr. Robinson is a practical and qualified farmer and he knows everything that there is to know about farming. He would never be a party to seeing the Government taken down.

Mr. Green: The Government have no time for an honest man.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Premier realised that Mr. Robinson is an honest man,

because one of his first actions, on assuming control, was to reinstate Mr. Robinson.

The Premier: He had resigned his position.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I know, but there are various ways of kicking a man out of his position. Anyhow, I hope the Premier will make the utmost use of Mr. Robinson's services. I know that some of the places which have been repurchased lately Mr. Robinson would have turned down with a bang on account of the excessive prices asked.

The Premier: How did you get that information?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It does not matter. I got it. We know that Mr. Robinson always looked after the interests of the State, and if he had remained there some of the areas which have been repurchased for soldiers would never have been in the possession of the Government to-day. It is necessary that the full facts of the case should be disclosed. It is necessary also that the country should be satisfied that the large sum of money which has been lent by the Federal Government for the purchase of estates has been spent wisely and well, and there should not be placed on the shoulders of the soldier an increased price because the Government have made a mistake in paying too much for the land. There is no doubt this has happened before and will happen again. If the Government buy land like that reported to have been purchased at Donnybrook, one half of which was rock and would not carry a sheep to 100 acres, the cost of the unproductive portion must be added to the value of the good portion, thus necessitating increased cost to the soldier settler.

The Premier: I will take you down there.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I asked the Premier to do so weeks ago and let us see it for ourselves. I had hoped we should have made that visit before we dealt with the Estimates.

The Premier: I wish I had taken you and we would have saved time on these Estimates.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The question raised by the member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) should receive investigation. I am safe in saying that 75 per cent. of the soldiers being settled on the land are really replacing farmers who have gone off the land. This is no good to the State; it is a loss to the State. We are borrowing money to release men who are experienced in farming and to put others in their places.

The Premier: That is true.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I made inquiries in the Eastern districts during our recent trip and was told that, in several instances, really good men had left the land because they could see a profit by selling to the Government for repatriation purposes; and they have gone away.

Hon. T. Walker: Gone East, some of them.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: And the State is the poorer for them having gone. We cannot carry out the policy of produce, produce, produce, if we take one man off the land in order to put another on the land. It would be better to leave the money with the Federal Government instead of burdening ourselves with interest charges at 6 per cent. unless we can increase the number of land holders in the State.

The Premier: So you shall.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: But we are not doing so. If the number of farmers on the land does not increase there will be no greater benefit to Fremantle as the Premier indicated; but if the number of farmers does increase on account of the borrowed money being brought into the State under the repatriation scheme, every seaport will benefit. We shall not progress until the Lands Department insist upon landowners finding a customer before they are allowed to leave their holdings. The department should not find buyers for them, but should find other land for the settlement of soldiers. This would give an opportunity to increase the population on the land and develop the farming industry and the State still further, but at present we are merely paying out loan money for land which is already developed and productive, and sending money out of the State with those people who have sold at a profit. I hope the Premier will look carefully into this matter. We want new settlers, but we do not want new settlers merely to replace those already on the land.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN (Forrest) [5.50]: The whole of the transactions of this department should be above suspicion, and I am prepared to admit that, judging by the volume of correspondence in the South-Western papers regarding the purchase of estates, sufficient has been said to warrant a departmental or other inquiry. Personally, I am opposed to the policy of any wholesale repurchase of estates for soldier settlement or otherwise, and I told the ex-Premier, Hon. H. B. Leffroy, so much a year or two ago. It is paradoxical that, while on the one hand we are advertising in the "British Australasian" that we have a million acres of Crown lands available for English settlers, on the other hand we have to borrow a large sum of money to acquire land for the settlement of returned soldiers. I am surprised that the member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) did not deal more extensively with the question of repurchased estates, because it is common knowledge that a public meeting, held in his own electorate, was attended by many practical farmers who vigorously condemned the proposals of the Government.

Mr. Pickering: I had a promise from the Premier to visit and investigate that matter.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The Premier may visit and investigate the matter, but while the aroma of suspicion still hangs around, it kills confidence in the intending soldier

selectors and leaves a very bad impression on the minds of the general public. The member for North-East Fremantle (Mr. Angwin) is quite correct in his statement regarding the composition of the boards. I am not blaming the Premier for this, because he was not in office. Many members of the board are well known to me and I have no charge against them, but no sooner was the board of several old residents constituted in the South-West than a whole crop of properties were unloaded on to the Government. In regard to the acquisition of the Donnybrook and Nannup properties, I inquired specially of several farmers whether those properties were likely to be taken up by men in the district who knew the value of them. On the occasion of my latest visit, there was not a solitary applicant for those properties which were acquired by the Government.

The Premier: They are gone now.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: But to whom?

The Premier: To soldiers.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: And for that reason the House should further inquire into the matter and demonstrate its sympathy with those soldiers. No one knows better than the Premier that we have become intoxicated with the enthusiasm that surrounds development, whether of land or gold production or development of other kinds. We have only to get people interested as they were during the land boom a few years ago when every second man in Perth was mad on going on the land. As a result there must be failures. A while ago, soldier friends of mine were rushing hot-headed into these propositions not knowing what was before them. The best test of the value of these properties is that men in the district, knowing the value, would be the first to send in applications. While it has been a comparatively easy matter for some of the old settlers to unload their properties on to the Government, it has been exceedingly difficult for people with small areas to get a purchaser through the Government. A resident of my district, Mr. Ockerby, had three small blocks which he offered very cheaply. The Bunbury branch of the Returned Soldiers' Association discussed the matter and agreed that the price was very low, but the department did not go even so far as to have an inspection made.

The Honorary Minister: What size were the blocks?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: One hundred and twenty acres; sufficient in that country, if anything rather too much; but no inspection was made. I know of a case in connection with the Agricultural Bank; the applicant was kept waiting eight months and the inspector has only gone there this week. The immigrant and his wife had almost given up in despair. This is due, I suppose, to a shortage of officers. That can be remedied and doubtless some of the increase is intended for that purpose.

The Premier: It should not take so long as eight months.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: No. Mr. Ockerby offered his property to the Repatriation Department and it was not considered worthy of inspection. The stereotyped reply one gets from the department to-day is to the effect that if a soldier makes application for this property and it appears to be suitable, we shall purchase it.

The Premier: That is so.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Why was not that the case in connection with the big properties? The Ravenscliff estate, acquired from Mr. J. L. Rose, consisted of 2,300 acres, of which 2,000 acres were hilly and stony and unsuitable for the settlement of returned soldiers. I admit this is a matter of opinion, but the files do not indicate that the weight of public opinion is in favour of the repurchase board. I met a member of the board one day and said, "It is remarkable how you are buying up these estates without having applications lodged for the properties when you purchase them." He said, "I quite agree that no more estates should be purchased. In fact I am sending a report in that no more should be purchased until those already purchased have been settled." He added that there was good value in the properties acquired.

The Premier: It is strange that the South-West always finds detractors among the people down there.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: It is better to face facts and be honest about the position and not magnify the value of any property.

The Premier: No, have the full truth all the time.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: That is all I want. I have no desire to disparage the Government or decry the South-West. The South-West is a patchy problem. There is some magnificent land and a lot of other quality.

The Premier: The same applies the whole world over.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: And particularly to the South-West.

Hon. P. Collier: The board have recommended the purchase of land at a price without knowing what the vendor would sell for.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: We have the proposition of the Heppingsstone Bros.' estate. That is 13 miles from a railway.

The Premier: They have bought that?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Yes, the Kendenup property. When the proposal was first put in by the owners for the Government to purchase, this property was inspected by a local officer and turned down. It was again offered to the Government and again turned down, and on the third occasion it was offered at a reduced price, a drop, I think, of £2,000. An officer was sent from Perth: he reported favourably on the offer and the estate was acquired. Is that a fact?

The Premier: I cannot tell you. It is on the files.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: It appears to me that only persistency is required to get the Government to purchase estates. If one is patriotic enough to unload property on the Re-

patriation Department, he cannot do much on his own, but if he has friends at court, it makes a great difference. The owners of big properties in the South-West had friends at court and the small owners had not.

Mr. Hardwick: The price was reduced.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: It only goes to show that the opinion put forward by the local inspector was varied. He turned it down, not on the score of price, but on account of unsuitability. We do not want the Government to be hawking re-purchased properties after having acquired them at excessive prices. We do not want a property containing 1,700 acres of ironstone ridges, as at Avondale. It is deplorable that we should be required to repurchase at all. If we have the Crown lands available, Government funds should be applied towards their development rather than to the removing of settlers of 30 or 40 years' standing from their holdings, and the taking advantage of the exuberant spirit of intending settlers who, I am afraid, will be disillusioned very soon after the Government funds earmarked for repatriation purposes cut out.

Mr. Maley: I hope those disillusioned settlers do not come out as members of Parliament.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: They would be foolish if they did, but I do not want them to be disappointed with the project they now have in view. The files indicate the necessity for an inquiry as to the repurchasing of these estates. A gentleman was appointed an agent of the Government with a salary of £750 per annum. He happened to be a very old resident of the South-West, where all his bosom pals reside. It is significant that the properties of his very intimate friends were quickly acquired by the Government.

The Premier: He did not buy his friends; he bought the land.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: As an agent of the Government he acquired the properties of some of his most intimate friends, whereas the small holder offering his block was promptly turned down.

The Premier: No.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I give you the instance of Orkerby at Wellington mills, in the Ferguson Valley, one of the most fertile districts in the South-West. The property will stand any inspection, yet there has been no move by the Repatriation Department to acquire it. Without any serious inspection the big properties of influential residents of the South-West are acquired by the Government. An inquiry would divulge what percentage of local settlers with a knowledge of the estates have applied for a block. It is not a very good recommendation for an estate that not a single local settler wants to purchase a block of it. The inference is that the burden the settlers will have to carry will prove too heavy. The file shows that the country is stony and hilly. If there is not a sufficient margin of first-class land included in his block, the soldier settler will have no hope

of succeeding. In the streets of Perth are hundreds of soldiers in most optimistic frame of mind. They are off pearing; they are going prospecting; they propose to take up farming. Many of them are purchasing little suburban businesses of very questionable value. They are all enthusiastic to get into some vocation in which they will be supporting themselves. It is those men the Minister is getting on to these repurchased estates. I do not object to that, but I say it would abolish the doubts of the men who do not know the locality if a few local settlers were applying for the land available. Returned soldiers by the hundreds have gone to that locality, but I have yet to learn the names of any farmer residents who applied for blocks in the estate.

The Premier: I will get you that information.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: If of all the young men reared in the South-West none apply for those blocks, it would suggest that the burden is too heavy. The policy of putting an experienced man off to put on one of inexperience is not a sound one. I do not say that the allegations against the department are all justifiable, but certainly we have sufficient charges from the public meetings in the South-West to warrant an inquiry. Practical farmers say that the estates are not worth the money. If that is so, those estates should not have been recommended by an officer drawing £750 per annum. The public meetings in the South-West have made out a case.

The Premier: I had nothing to do with the purchase of those estates.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: No, but if the files disclose that certain people have taken advantage of the Government, would it not be better for the reputation of the Government and at the same time instil some confidence in the soldier settlers, if the inquiry were to put it right. Those public meetings demonstrated that there was keen dissatisfaction in the district. I have read the speeches of practical farmers there who condemn the proposal. And, after all, we ought to be guided by such men.

The Premier: That is only in regard to one estate.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: There are two of them, one in particular, Ravenscliffe. A few weeks ago the member for Sussex was active in seeking information in regard to the purchase of those estates, but he seems to have gone cold again.

The Honorary Minister: The report of the Ravenscliffe estate shows that it was the cheapest estate they have purchased.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Mr. Venn assured me of that also, but there are people in the Donnybrook district equally competent to give an opinion. The Government should take notice of the local committee. At the public meeting the members of the local committee unanimously condemned the purchase of the property.

Mr. Munsie: Is it not a fact that the local committee resigned?

The Minister for Mines: Suppose they advised the purchase of an estate irrespective of value.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I should not be guided by the repatriation committee of every district. It may happen that some indifferent committee would recommend a property at a price above its value; but even that would only be due to a network of influence in a small district.

The Honorary Minister: The mistake was that the people at that public meeting thought the stony portion of the land was being paid for. The report shows that the board regarded it as valueless, and did not include it in the valuation of the property.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The local people say the valuation of the homestead is altogether exaggerated. Before the hon. member decided to uproot the famous orchard he went to practical men for a report. On this occasion he will not go to practical men, but ignores them. The public meeting called on the Honorary Minister to resign, but he did not do it. There was a risk involved.

The Honorary Minister: No. My constituents have a repatriation committee over the border who are entirely opposed to the other committee.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The position is that in the first place we are going in too extensively for repurchasing. Secondly, I do not think the board is the best that could be secured. Their subsequent actions have proved it. It is remarkable that three or four big estates, some of them offered three times to the Government, were eventually acquired from intimate friends of the official concerned. My fear is that the soldiers going from the city will be attracted by the surroundings and will not properly assess the difficulties that confront them. When the Government money set aside for the purchase is exhausted, those men will leave the land, disheartened and dispirited.

The Minister for Works: Will a commission put that right?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: No, but it would at least remove the talk going round, clear up the suspicion that attaches to the recommendations made by Mr. Brazier in respect of the properties acquired by the Government, allay the feeling that the Government have not had a fair crack of the whip, and give confidence to a soldier settler that he is going on to a property that will permit of his making good.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I do not wish to say anything further on the question of repurchased estates, beyond expressing my sincere hope that the Premier will go thoroughly into the matter and ascertain whether the State has obtained fair value for the money expended, and whether reasonable possibilities are ahead of the soldiers taking up those areas. In a country

like Western Australia the success of one department is largely dependent on the activities of another department, and of late years my experience has been, particularly as regards the South-West, that whilst an effort is being made to settle people on the land, most discouraging results are met with when those people, having been settled, seek the assistance of other departments. I refer particularly to the Railway Department. I have in mind a large area of country in the Nannup district, with some of the finest soil in the State. The railway facilities provided, however, are so insufficient that the settlers are sometimes obliged, for want of closer railway communication, to drive their stock to Balingup. On a recent visit to the district I noticed a man who was driving pigs a distance of 28 miles to the railway in order to catch the market. People on the land cannot succeed in such circumstances. The difficulty is that there is only one train per week in that locality, whereas before the war there were four trains, or even five, per week.

The Premier: It will be altered.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: No doubt it will be altered if the settlers wait and wait, but meantime they are likely to go through the bankruptcy court. Where there is good land, not only should the Lands Department aid the settlers by every possible means, but other Government activities should also come to their assistance. A little while ago I referred to the inordinate delays in inspection by the Agricultural Bank. I know of a case where inspection has been hanging on for seven or eight months, and I suppose the people concerned will never go back to the property again, as the husband is undergoing an operation from which the doctors think he is not likely to recover. These people, who are settlers from overseas, are unable to persevere any further, having spent all their capital. I know of another case, which I shall bring under the notice of the Premier in writing, where a man has been a farm manager for 25 years in this country, and has cleared no less than 3,600 acres of our forest land. Of recent years he has been managing a large estate, which was sold to the Government, whereupon his services were dispensed with. Then he took up a block of land adjoining that estate. That block must be in a fair locality, in view of the purchase of the other estate by the Repatriation Department. He applied to the Agricultural Bank for assistance; and, in his absence, an inspector viewed the land and reported that there was too much stony country. This man has had a lifelong experience of Western Australian land.

The Premier: He must have been a long time at work.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Yes. He is over 50 years of age. He must be a good worker. The Premier knows the people for whom that man has worked during a number of years. The man himself says that there are

not two acres of land in the whole block that are unploughable. He considers it unfair that he should be turned down after having cleared 30 or 40 acres and built a hut, while farmers on the Industries Assistance Board are able to draw 9s. a day. In some cases, though not a large percentage, we know that those farmers will not show good results. The Premier knows, as every member of this Committee knows, that a certain percentage of assisted farmers will never make good. But here is a man of vast experience, anxious to launch out on his own, and having selected a piece of land adjoining country purchased by the Repatriation Department; and it seems somewhat illogical that the Agricultural Bank should turn him down.

The Premier: When the Agricultural Bank make advances it is wrong, and when they do not make advances it is wrong.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The Premier cannot point to much criticism directed against the Agricultural Bank in this Chamber. I am not going to condemn the bank's inspector, but I think the insufficiency of inspectors often leads to trouble of this kind.

The Premier: There is no doubt about that.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: If the Premier agrees that there is no doubt about that, he must have some conception of the difficulties confronting people who are starting to carve out a home for themselves. I have no desire to discuss the matter at further length just now, because there will be opportunity for that on the items. However, I believe it is a record, certainly it is the first experience of the kind I have had during my 11 years in this Chamber, that the general discussion of the Lands Department Estimates has been practically dropped by members on the Government cross benches. Evidently those members are well satisfied. If their constituents have no grievances, it shows that there has been improvement effected. Another explanation might be that the Country party are—

Hon. P. Collier: Moribund.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I will not say they are moribund. There are one or two live members in the party. But possibly the party are reluctant to criticise the Government they have created, the Government that are kept in power by the votes of the Country party. I do not think the recent shuffle in the Lands Department, which was responsible for introducing an Under Secretary for Mines into that department, reflects any credit on the late Government. In my opinion it savoured of a little influence being directed to favour one individual. I said so at the time in this Chamber. It was demonstrated here then that the man appointed was a relative of the late Premier.

Hon. P. Collier: I think the late Premier said it was not so.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The late Premier very cleverly got out of the difficulty when questioned by the member for Kalgoorlie. That member asked the late Premier whether

the gentleman appointed was a blood relation of his, and the Premier said no. But there is no doubt he is a pretty pronounced relative of the late Premier all the same. After a short experience it has been demonstrated that the two positions of Surveyor General and Under Secretary of the Lands Department cannot be satisfactorily held by the one officer; and the result has been that other officers of the Lands Department, who in my opinion were due for promotion years ago, have had to stand down whilst an officer was brought in from the Mines Department. Now, instead of economy being effected, the officer in question is to retain his position as Surveyor General at £800 a year, and a new office will be created, and those public servants who are suffering from blighted hopes will have to, like the settlers waiting for a report from an inspector of the Agricultural Bank, hold on and carry on. I could speak at considerable length, but I have a desire to help the Government to transact their business. Therefore, I reserve my further remarks until we come to discuss the individual items.

Mr. HICKMOTT (Pingelly) [7.40]: Undoubtedly a great deal of dissatisfaction exists with regard to the operations of the Repatriation Department, and I was much surprised when the Premier, in replying to a question I asked recently, said he was not aware that there was considerable dissatisfaction with that department. The Premier asked me on that occasion to specify some cases of dissatisfaction. It is well known that several soldiers have applied for blocks on the estate to which my question referred. It is also well known that another property in the same district, known as Dobson's property, was inspected by the local repatriation board, and that the inspector of the Repatriation Department did not visit that property at all. He went only as far as Brookton, where he learnt that the property was 20 miles out. Thereupon he said, "That is quite sufficient; it is too far away for a returned soldier." The soldier was offered that property, comprising 2,000 acres, for £1,600. It is well fenced with dog-proof fencing, and is well cleared, and has an assured rainfall. The returned soldier wanted the property for grazing purposes only; and the Premier knows that a number of the gentlemen who waited on him at Beverley lately regarding railway extension are doing very well in the same locality from grazing pursuits only. The soldier was also offered 500 ewes by the man selling the property, so that we would have had a fair start. It is high time that these matters were cleared up. Indeed, the general body of returned soldiers hanging about from day to day waiting on the Repatriation Department in Perth are seething with dissatisfaction; and I fear that unless something is done to get these soldiers settled on the land there will be ructions before long.

The Premier: The trouble arises from a few people who cannot sell their properties.

Mr. HICKMOTT: The property I refer to is a good property, and has been offered cheap. As regards the repurchased estates in the South-West, I know some of that country very well, having looked at it when in search of a property on my first arrival in Western Australia. One place I know of has been purchased in the South-West against the wishes of the owner, who has sons away at the Front. When asked to sell his property, he said he wanted it for his boys. It is a scandalous thing, if it is true, that this man should have been compelled to sell his property. I understand that one of the sons has now purchased the homestead back from the Government at £12 or £12 10s. per acre, whilst the Government purchased the property at £7 per acre. Such things want clearing up. With reference to the remarks of the member for North-East Fremantle as to this party always asking for something on behalf of the farmer, I deny that I have ever demanded that the farmer should be spoon fed. I defy hon. members on the Opposition benches to prove that I ever requested to be spoon fed or that I upheld the principle. I have always been against it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I said, some of them.

Mr. HICKMOTT: The Government should give the people the best facilities they can for getting their goods to market, and should provide in the early stages roads and water supplies. Any man who goes on the land should be quite prepared to do something for himself. I know as much about the hardships and difficulties of pioneering as any man in the House, or in this country. I was never spoon fed by any Government. In my early days we did not know what it was to apply to the Government for assistance. We had to do what we could for ourselves, or get off the land. I hope the Government will clear up these rumours which are going about. If land has been purchased at an exorbitant price, through the influence of relations or friends, we should know whether it is true or not. It is only ridiculing the Government and discrediting the soldiers themselves to permit of such a thing. We have dozens of returned soldiers who are trying to get some place on the land. They want it very badly. Several fine types of men who have been farmers in other countries, and have been on the land here, have come to me. Some of them have been trying for five or six months to settle somewhere.

The Premier: I told you a couple of years ago that it would be so, but you did not believe me.

Mr. HICKMOTT: They are still without any land. Two young fellows came to see me last week. We saw Mr. McLarty, who advised them to go to the Brooklands estate, saying that it was a well improved place and that the country was splendid. He was sure they would be satisfied down there, but that was all he had to offer them. One young fellow went down and reported that the land was good but that the price was £15 an acre, the land being subdivided into 20 or 30 acre

blocks. Any settler on that land would be called upon to lay out a good deal of money in machinery, and build a homestead before he could live there. How is it possible for any soldier to make good on a proposition of that kind? This young fellow came back without applying for the land as he thought it too heavy a burden to carry. There is a place which came specially under my notice, for it is in my own electorate. It is only three miles from a siding. It contains 900 acres, and a man and his wife have done very well on it. This man is offering the property as a going concern at £2 an acre. I think six or seven different soldiers have looked at it, and half a dozen applications are in for it. The authorities, however, say it is too big a place for one man to handle. It is ready for anyone to take up as a going concern, and any new settler could begin producing at once. The amount involved is only £1,800, and yet the authorities say it is too big a place for one man. If we are going to do that sort of thing in connection with a property so close to a railway, where people are doing well as it is, and the property is recommended by the local farmers who understand the district and know what they are talking about, how are we going to settle our returned soldiers?

Mr. MALEY (Greenough) [7.50]: It is strange that, in a State containing 400 million acres of unalienated land, it should be necessary to scour the country to purchase or repurchase estates for soldier settlement. I agree with a great deal of what has been said by the member for North-East Fremantle (Mr. Angwin). It is a very bad policy to buy one man out and put another man in. When speaking, the hon. member stated that soldiers were being charged for the land twice as much as the Government had paid for it. The hon. member must know that, taking it on a basis of a 20 years' lease, with interest at five per cent. on the capital value, land purchased at 20s. an acre works out at 11s. in the pound interest. In the case of a 40 years' lease, which is the term allowed for our soldiers who take up land, the amount would be 22s. in the pound. The Government are charging soldiers double the price of the land, but that is the reason for it. These estates have to be resurveyed and reclassified, and there are the administrative charges and interest, etc., which increase the initial capital value by 100 per cent. That has been the case with all the repurchased estates since 1909—with the Bowes estate, the Narra Tarra, the Onkabella, and Avondale estates. The few settlers who have gone on to these properties have not yet been able to make good owing to the extremely high overhead costs. The same condition of affairs will apply here in the future when the initial period of five years, when no claims at all will be made, is finished. After five years the soldier will have to earn more than 10 per cent. of his capital to enable him to pay his way and the interest and sinking fund, which will come

into operation after the fifth year. The allegations made by members on the Opposition benches are only intended to stir up members on the cross benches to prolong the debate. We should look for the development of the State in general. I am not concerned about any particular portion of it, whether it be the South-West or the North-West. There is any amount of scope for development in both parts of the State. The Premier would be wise to establish settlement in the North-West. I do not take much notice of the remarks which have been made in regard to compulsory resumption, either of pastoral or any other class of land. Any effort at compulsory resumption is going to defeat the object that it is intended to carry out. The Premier knows that there has been some dissatisfaction owing to the fact that no estates have been repurchased in the Geraldton district. In my opinion the board are quite justified in turning down the several propositions placed before them at the prices asked. The owners of these estates, however, were quite prepared to go to arbitration in the matter of values and, in their opinion, the result of that arbitration would have been that the Government would have had to pay an amount slightly in excess of that originally asked. The fact that the Government are out to purchase estates for soldiers has enhanced land values. It is only human nature for people to put a slightly increased price on their land in such circumstances. I should like the Premier to state what has happened in connection with the throwing open of the area that was purchased about nine months ago at Carnamah. This estate was repurchased for £27,000 and if settlement had been expedited the soldiers could have secured the benefit of last season. What are the intentions of the Government in regard to the reclassification and reappraisal of the pastoral leases? If Mr. Canning is to make a personal inspection, or reclassification, of every individual pastoral lease, it will take him 20 years to complete the work. By that time the extension of the leases to 1948 will have come about. It seems to me absolutely impossible that an individual classification will be made in all these areas which have been alienated under pastoral leases, comprising 230 million acres. The Premier gave no actual details as to how long this particular work would take. The outlook for the future is more than bright and the optimism of the Premier has tended to cause people to look on the brighter side of things. Although at the end of the next five years or so the new soldier settlers will have to begin paying the money back to the Treasury, the State itself is increasing its facilities in regard to agriculture generally. I refer particularly to butter and bacon factories and freezing works. I hope, in the intervening period, while these men are getting hold of the land and establishing themselves, that such conditions will prevail that they will be able to enjoy many more facilities than the unfortunate settlers did

who were on the land in the past. We are urged to turn to mixed farming, and to the growing of wheat and sheep together, but in my opinion farming has been mixed ever since Adam commenced operations. Under those conditions I have referred to, I think the future holds out better prospects in regard to the returns from agriculture than unfortunately have prevailed in the past.

Mr. PIESSE (Toodyay) [8.0]: During the course of the trip which members took through the eastern wheat belt a few weeks ago I was able to collect some interesting figures, which I intend to quote to the House to show how assisted farmers have been able to succeed with the aid of the Industries Assistance Board. The Labour Government we all know initiated that scheme of assistance, and the results in many instances have been highly satisfactory. While we were out on that trip of inspection, I inquired into a number of cases casually and I am able to give seven instances to show how the farmers have progressed with the financial help which was given to them. I will not mention names but will describe each farmer by a letter of the alphabet. "A" is a farmer at Korrelocking. At the end of 1915 he owed the I.A.B £1,800. To-day that man does not owe the board anything and he has 1,600 acres under crop, promising a very high average. He also has his whole equipment free. "B" is a farmer at Korrelocking who at the end of June, 1915, owed the Industries Assistance Board £1,000. Now he is free of debt and he has 450 acres under crop, also promising a high average. "C" is another farmer who is well known to the member for North-East Fremantle (Mr. Angwin). He arrived on his holding with a shilling, but because of the assistance he got from the Industries Assistance Board he has been able to pull through. At the end of 1915 he owed the board £1,100. To-day he has a 450-acre crop promising a very high average, and he has in addition several hundred pounds cash in hand. "D" is a farmer at Trayning. He owed the board £1,500 in 1915. To-day he is free of debt and has wheat in the pool valued approximately at £600. "E" is also a farmer at Trayning who was formerly a civil servant. He went out there with very little capital, and becoming stranded secured the assistance of the board. In 1915 he owed the board £1,500. To-day he is off the board and has 530 acres under crop, promising a high average. "F" is a returned soldier. At the end of 1917 he owed the board £1,100. To-day he owes £115 and has 520 acres promising a 20-bushel average. I just made inquiries about these cases at random. I could have made myself familiar with many more instances of farmers having got into a sound position if I had cared to do so. My desire, however, is to emphasise the

boon that the Industries Assistance Board has been to the farming community and the fact that men have paid back money advanced to them and that many others will do likewise. There are still a good number in the struggling stage, and if it is at all possible for those men to make good, they will surely do so. A pleasant feature is the fact that a number of properties which were abandoned a little time ago are now being taken up again and anything that is of a promising nature is being applied for. I regret our friends opposite have so frequently made sarcastic references to the assistance which is given to the farming community. The farmers, however, are badly in need of wire for fencing, and if it were only possible for those people in the eastern areas to be free of one pest only, namely, the wild dog, it would be possible for them to depasture thousands of store stock and prepare them for the market. The unfortunate part is that, as soon as a man gets a few sheep, he is not able to protect them because his fences are not dog-proof. The wild dogs are not numerous and I do not suppose that in an area 100 miles square there would be more than between 50 to 100 dogs. Still, that number effectively prevents a settler securing store sheep. Some, however, are able to purchase cattle, but it is only those who are in more favourable circumstances who can do that. I know of one instance where a man secured 355 store bullocks and they are almost in a marketable condition. The wild dogs will not touch that kind of stock. The Government should make some effort in the direction of assisting the farmers to destroy the native dog pest. Repeated representations have been made in this regard, but nothing has been done by way of engaging the services of a capable man. It may be possible to get a community of farmers to do that work amongst themselves. I am perfectly convinced, however, that any steps taken would be very good business and would enable the farmers to secure some stock, at any rate, for their holdings. I regret there should be any justification for the remarks made by the member for North-East Fremantle (Mr. Angwin) in connection with repatriation work. The hon. member stated that undue influence had been used in connection with the purchase of properties, and I agree that if such a thing exists an inquiry should be held. So far as buying up ready-made farms is concerned, that is largely due to the desire of the soldiers themselves. Nine out of 10 returned men prefer to go on an improved property. If we show a returned soldier virgin country he will say immediately, "It is of no use, I prefer improved land." I do not know of any particular favour having been shown to soldiers in my district. I know that some large properties have been refused by the Repatriation Department or the Land Board, and that very few small holdings have been bought up unless it be where the owner has been financially involved and he has pre-

ferred to sell rather than carry on himself; but I repeat it is mainly owing to the desire of the returned men themselves that improved farms have been purchased. There is a large area of good country north of Dowerin which could be very profitably settled, but it would require a new line of railway to open it up. I want to stress the fact that whatever assistance has been given to the farmer, that assistance was first given at the instance of our friends opposite. It was on their initiative that those steps were taken and splendid work was done by them.

Hon. P. Collier: It has slackened off considerably since then.

Mr. PIESSE: I believe it has continued in its usual flow. True there were grievous errors made in the settlement of the country through lack of knowledge. To-day, however, we have a board working on a good footing, and I am safe in saying that the settlement of the country will be carried out in a proper manner, and we have, as the leader of the Opposition knows, instead of a continual wail as in the past, expressions of satisfaction from a contented community.

Mr. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [8.13]: During the last few months I have been approached by a large number of returned soldiers with requests that I should try to get some of them settled on pastoral areas. Hon. members must be satisfied that there is no industry in this State that pays so well as the pastoral industry. From the various conversations I have had with officers of the Repatriation Department I have come to the conclusion that they are of opinion that the assistance offered by the Government to settle returned soldiers in pastoral areas is not adequate. That is altogether opposed to the experience I have gained in the Gascoyne district. Some 16 or 17 years ago I was sent to open a new bank in the Gascoyne district, and during the time I looked after that bank the institution was responsible for starting 14 or 16 new stations. I can safely say that in most instances there was not as much capital furnished with which to make a start as the Repatriation Board are offering to the returned soldiers to-day to enable them to make a commencement in this direction. One case comes to my mind at the present moment. An applicant who came to the bank for assistance had a capital of £500 with which to start in the industry, and the country he took up was 210 miles from a port. That man now is in a very flourishing position, and I know that he has invested £1,600 in war loans. That proves my contention that the assistance offered by the Government is adequate. Another case occurs to my mind, and the member for Kalgoorlie will know the man to whom I am referring. A friend guaranteed this man £1,000 and he established himself in the industry. Some years afterwards he sold out to his son, who is now thriving and is able to run his own motor car. I contend the Government would be safe in encouraging men with a certain amount of experience to settle on pastoral

areas, and I believe that with £1,250 or £1,500 a man could make a satisfactory commencement. Another trouble is that there are very few pastoral areas offering. I regret that the pastoral area on the Murchison, to which I referred last year, has not proved satisfactory. I was led to believe that a good portion of the country near Hamelin Pool could be settled by returned soldiers. I was guided in that opinion by the knowledge and experience of several men who had seen it, but further inspection has proved that it is not suitable. A notice of motion has been tabled by the member for Mt. Magnet (Mr. Troy) suggesting that all pastoral land within 50 miles of a port should be resumed by the Government. That is not going to help us very much. It is a bad policy to repudiate a contract which the resumption of such land would amount to, especially when that land is carrying all the sheep it possibly can carry. The member for North-East Fremantle (Mr. Angwin) has pointed out very wisely that it is not good policy to take one man off a holding to put another on, but I contend that if the Government took the right measures, a good deal of pastoral land could be found. Members who get the circulars from the different station agents doing business in Perth will have noticed that there is a large number of properties always on hand for sale. I suggest to the Government, as I suggested to the Minister some months ago, that a circular letter be sent to every pastoral lessee in the northern portion of the State pointing out that land is required for returned soldiers and that, under the Repatriation Act, the Government have the power to resume the land if they so desire. These pastoral lessees should be asked if they are prepared to put a price on their holdings or any portion of their holdings which they are not using. I can assure the Committee that 40 or 50 per cent. of the pastoral holdings in the Gascoyne district alone are not being fully utilised at the present time. There are men with 200,000 to 600,000 acres who are using only probably half their holdings. A circular letter of the description I have mentioned would lead to a good deal of land being offered to the Government and, as it would be practically unimproved, it could be acquired at a very reasonable figure. If the lessee did not put a reasonable price on any land he was offering, the Government would have an opportunity to bring that section of the Repatriation Act providing for resumption into operation. It would be a good idea to make an inspection of our pastoral land which has not been alienated. There is a lot of good country 200 miles from Carnarvon which is being taken up, some for sheep grazing and some for cattle raising. Recently an application was made to the officer in charge of repatriation for assistance for two young men who had acquired a property 150 miles out of Carnarvon. The application was disposed of by a minute on the file to the effect that it was too far from a port for wool carting. The man I quoted, who started with £500,

was 210 miles out and he made good. Much land which is now considered to be too far out could be brought into profitable production, especially when pastoralists are going in for wool scouring as they are doing and are thus cutting down carting expenses to a considerable extent. May I compliment the Premier on the business acumen he showed in arranging the business trip to the Eastern wheat belt. I only voice the opinion of the Committee when I say that the small expense involved will be amply repaid to the State. There are members of this House who had no idea of what splendid country we have in the wheat belt, but something should be done almost immediately to make better use of that country. In the report of the Royal Commission on agriculture, a couple of years ago, will be found the account of a visit to South Australia. The members of the Commission were very much impressed with the methods of conserving crops adopted there. It would be good policy if the Government secured the services of one of those farmers who has been going in for crop preservation, to advise our settlers what to do. I believe the land those farmers have been cultivating in South Australia is very similar to our own, but they have longer periods of drought and their dry seasons occur more frequently than ours. According to our records, we have one dry season in about every four years. From what we saw of the abundant crops in the Eastern wheat belt, surely sufficient could be preserved to carry the farmers over the cycle of dry seasons. The Government should encourage these farmers to conserve water to a larger extent than they do at present. To put down 700 or 800 yard tanks is trifling with the business; the Government should insist that at least 2,000 yard tanks should be sunk. I feel confident that the proper preservation of feed during the good seasons to use in the dry seasons and the more ample conservation of water will lead to a vast new province being added to the State. From what I saw there are great areas of splendid land not yet touched and the Government, instead of buying out the old estates and replacing old experienced men with new men, should handle that task and arrange for large strips of the virgin forest to be cut down and made available for cultivation. This could be done by sending out bands of soldiers to clear the country for a start and, as it is cleared, it could be cut up and handed over to the returned soldier to form his future home. The Premier said he considered all the butter required for Perth could be supplied by the wheat belt during five months of the year. I cannot see why it could not be supplied all the year round. Even in Carnarvon we have made butter in our own homes all the year round, simply by using a little ice in the hot weather. If feed were preserved in the way recommended by the Royal Commission to make sure of a supply of green fodder all the year round, it should be possible to make butter all the year round. This is one of the things we should look

forward to; the State should no longer import butter and commodities of that kind which we ourselves can produce in Western Australia. I hope the Premier will see his way to arrange more of these business trips. We should know more about the Esperance district and, lastly, the North-West is deserving of a visit say by a small band of six or seven members.

Mr. Griffiths: Why limit the number?

Mr. ANGELO: It would be too expensive to arrange for many members to make the trip. Perhaps a committee could be appointed to decide who should go, but let both sides of the House be represented and another place as well. If an extended tour of the North-West were arranged during the recess, the members making the trip could pay for their own food and drink, if necessary, but the Government should provide the transport facilities. Let it be a purely business trip. If such a trip were arranged, it would mean an immense thing for that part of the State. It would show members what the North-West can offer in the way of land for settlement, and I am certain it would be the beginning of bringing that huge asset, which at present is hardly touched, into development and thus assist materially in the advancement of the State.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Mitchell—Northam—in reply) [8.25]: I knew full well five years ago that the time would come when I should be attacked in connection with the settlement of soldiers on the land. I told the House two years ago that this would happen.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You did not know then that you would be in charge and would be attacked.

The PREMIER: I hoped so, but I did know a year before that when I was in Melbourne and saw that the Prime Minister had a lot of money available to prepare land against the home coming of the soldiers. I have had something to do with the settlement of people on the land and, when there are 3,000 people to be settled, it takes a time. One cannot do it in five minutes. The member for Pingelly (Mr. Hickmott) mentioned the case of one soldier here and another soldier there. I know of 1,000 or 2,000 soldiers. We have settled 1,230 up to the 23rd of this month.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: On how many new areas?

The PREMIER: But for the Act of last year, we would not have been able to settle half this number. We are placing these men on the land at the rate of 50 a week. Each week we settle a strip of land equal in length to that strip from here to Pinjarra and a mile wide. I am willing to appoint men to the staff in order that this work may be carried out as quickly as possible, but members should be a little reasonable. It is a very big job which should have been undertaken two years ago and pushed then as actively as we are pushing it to-day.

Mr. Pickering: It should have been started in 1914.

The PREMIER: Well, two years ago at the very latest.

Mr. Harrison: You were not alone in that opinion.

The PREMIER: No.

Hon. P. Collier: None of you expressed it very emphatically 12 months ago.

The PREMIER: So far 3,592 men have applied, and I think 4,000 will apply altogether. Up to the present, 2,275 have been qualified and 1,230 have been settled. Up to five months ago, 360 soldiers had been settled on the land, and about 900 have been settled within the last five months. As I said before, we are settling them at the rate of 50 a week. There always will be criticism of the scheme so long as it lasts. To-night we have heard quite solemnly and seriously from members that we are always wrong when we make purchases. There was never a purchase which some member did not say was wrong and should not have been made. The member for Pingelly spoke both ways, and the same applies to the member for Forrest, in fact to every member who spoke.

Mr. Harrison: You are wrong there.

The PREMIER: With the exception of the leader of the Country party. It always will be so. We are doing all that can be done. Mr. McLarty is the best officer for the job, and I believe no man knows more about the land or can put up a greater fight for the returned soldiers. It is a mistake to take one man off the land and put another on, but that cannot always be avoided. The system has grown up and it must continue to some extent. It does not always happen that the man already on the land is doing the best with it. As far as we can we are settling Crown lands, but the soldier sees that his friends have gone on to made farms, and so he wants the same advantage. We have many Crown land blocks surveyed and ready, but the soldiers do not want them. I am exercising care to see that the soldiers get value in their made farms, and I want to see also that they get land that will give them a fair chance. However, it is not necessary for me to worry on this score, because Mr. McLarty and his board will see to it. The estates mentioned to-night were purchased before I became Minister. I believe they were purchased at a reasonable price and quite fairly, and I was altogether surprised to hear the member for North-East Fremantle say that undue influence was used.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is common talk.

The PREMIER: Yes, but what is the value of common talk? If any one of us were to hear what his best friends have said of him during the past 24 hours I do not know what he would think of himself. I do not believe any member of the board has been influenced. I believe that each member of the board is an honourable man, and I think we ought to be very careful before impugning anybody's character.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You have not read the files.

The PREMIER: The hon. member can have all the files, and any information he desires. He can go to the office and see any of the files there and inquire into anything in which he is interested.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: If the files were here to-night we could quote from them.

The PREMIER: They were here, but they had to be taken back, for they are in use. The hon. member can see any file he wishes; in fact I should be glad if any hon. member would go through the files and point out to me anything he considers wrong. No better men, no more honourable men, no men more keenly interested in their work could be found than the three members of the board.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: How often was the personnel of the board changed?

The PREMIER: I do not know. I made considerable changes myself, because the surveyors on the board were required for other work. Only for that reason did I make the changes.

Hon. P. Collier: In one case a member of a board recommended the purchase of land adjoining his own. Subsequently that member resigned and sold his own land to the board at the price which he had previously helped to fix in the case of his neighbour's land.

The PREMIER: I know nothing of that.

Hon. P. Collier: A member of the board resigned and wired to the department recommending a man to take his place. Is that proper?

The PREMIER: No, it is not; probably it was thoughtlessly done. All the same, I doubt if any man has been on the board who could not be trusted. Most certainly the board of to-day could not be questioned. When an estate is offered it is classified by the departmental officers. Then the board inspect and report. The report is submitted to the soldier settlement board, and they have to approve before the property is purchased. No system could be more complete.

Hon. P. Collier: In one case they offered a price before they asked if the owner wanted to sell. He accepted at once. That is not business.

The PREMIER: No, it is not. I doubt if it could happen now. I am perfectly willing to give the fullest information to any member of the House. Every acre of Crown land fit for settlement will be settled, whether by soldiers or civilians. I have not yet seen the estates referred to, but I hope to do so as soon as the session is over, which will be next week if hon. members will put through the Estimates and pass a few Bills.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You can get away as soon as your Estimates are through.

The PREMIER: I could not leave the hon. member here. The member for Forrest said that the farms were not inspected. He also referred to another property which he said had been offered, turned down, and sub-

sequently bought at a reduction of £2,000. Surely that is explicable. The member for York said something about the land at Harvey. If hon. members take up every case brought to them they will be pretty busy. The Harvey land was sold. We have been going into the matter during the past few months, and I think that within the next day or two the soldiers will have an opportunity for selecting a good area of that land; because I believe it will come back to us, one fairly large purchaser having expressed his willingness to let us have the land for the soldiers. Pastoral lands must be made available to soldiers. Mr. Canning is down here now, and we are discussing the matter with him. We have a board of expert pastoralists whose duty it is to advise us in regard to the settlement of soldiers on pastoral areas. The utmost care will have to be exercised in this connection, because the settlement of a number of men of limited capital on pastoral lands is not an easy matter. Many men have succeeded in the past, due largely to their knowing the district and being helped by surrounding friends, which is a very different case from that of trying to settle a large number of men with no friends in the locality. I have offered the fullest information in respect of all that has happened concerning soldier settlement, and again I proffer the fullest detail at any time an hon. member may require it. I am only anxious to see that the soldier gets a fair deal, while at the same time the interests of the State are protected. No hon. member knows better the value of the farmers and the soldiers to the State than does the member for North-East Fremantle, whose district was once a fairly dull place. In recent years Fremantle has been considerably livened up by the farmers.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: My electorate has been the most lively in Western Australia for the last 20 years.

The PREMIER: No, it was absolutely dead, until the farmers came to its assistance. It is now likely to be considerably livened up by the returned soldiers.

Item, postage, stationery, travelling, transport, etc., £2,800:

Mr. SMITH: This is a glaring instance of expenditure being covered up by camouflage. No information is given. Moreover, the item has been exceeded by £1,000. This year it includes "agistment of starving stock." I should like to know how much money has been spent in this connection.

The PREMIER: This item dates back to 1914, and it may contain a few shillings outstanding on account of agistment of starving stock. The decrease this year is due to expenditure upon soldier settlement, which amounted last year to £781, being transferred to the soldier vote.

Item, Surveys generally, £2,070:

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I desire to obtain an undertaking from the Premier as regards the future policy of the department. Survey parties are sent out periodically, but they are

not located in the right district at the particular season of the year. When there is a specially wet winter, and transport is exceptionally difficult in the South-West, survey parties are sent there, whereas they should be sent to the drier portions of the State in the winter time and utilised in the South-West during the summer months. Possibly as an electioneering dodge, a survey party was sent to Nornalup during the winter. It was waterlogged a few days after arrival in the district. Sufficient foresight is not shown in the direction of the survey parties.

The PREMIER: I entirely agree with the hon. member, and effect has already been given to all that he suggests.

Mr. Nairn: A survey party was sent to Bridgetown last week.

Mr. MALEY: Is it the Premier's intention to revert to the old system of district survey offices? They were abolished on the plea of economy.

The PREMIER: I believe in decentralisation, and I realise that survey work cannot be done satisfactorily under any other conditions. There are district survey offices at Northam, Bridgetown, and Narrogin; and a competent surveyor is being sent to Geraldton.

Mr. GREEN: Are surveyors proceeding from Nornalup to Manjimup?

The Premier: They will be in that district. Not many of them are there yet.

Mr. GREEN: Four or five weeks ago they were between Denmark and Nornalup, although the country was covered with water.

The Premier: That is the railway survey party.

Mr. GREEN: Is this survey to be like the survey for the Esperance railway?

The Premier: Very like that.

Mr. GREEN: Then it is only bluff stakes so far as the Premier is concerned. A railway from Denmark to Nornalup and Deep River would, under certain conditions, be thoroughly justified; but I believe it is at present impracticable to build a railway from Denmark to Manjimup, because a great deal of that country will not be settled for many years.

The PREMIER: Both the line mentioned by the hon. member and the Esperance railway will be built as soon as they can be built economically.

Item, Wages, surveyors' assistants, chainmen, and labourers occasionally employed, £3,600:

Mr. BROWN: Last year's estimates for this item was £2,000, and £3,441 was spent. This year's estimate is £3,600. What are the reasons for the increase?

The PREMIER: It is the same old answer, that the increase is due to increased activity. Perhaps I should explain that surveys of land for sale are made from Loan Votes, which will come before hon. members presently.

Item, Expenses incidental to surveys generally, including purchase of mathematical instruments, horses, and equipment for sur-

vveyors, forage for horses, repairs to equipment, freight and carriage, travelling, camp, and sustenance allowances, and upkeep of motor cars, etc., £3,450.

Mr. LAMBERT: What is the expenditure on each of these items, and especially on the last?

The PREMIER: I have not the details here, but I will get them for the hon. member if he desires them. When camps are being set up, forage found for horses, vehicles purchased and sustenance allowance given for the men, £3,000 does not go very far.

Item, Purchase of motor car, £270:

Mr. BROWN: To what does this item refer? If it is a second-hand motor car, it will probably prove a complete loss to the State at this price, and the Committee should not pass the item.

The PREMIER: This is for a motor car for use in the North-West to carry out the valuations of pastoral country. I understand it is a new Ford car.

Mr. ANGELO: We were told that there were 16 Government cars in the garage and several others in different parts of the State. The Government should have some policy as to the kind of car they require for general use. It would be good business if, after first deciding upon the car most suitable for the work, they stuck to one make of car. Such a system would be more economical than the present one, the consumption of petrol would be checked and the cost of maintenance would not be so high as it is at present.

The PREMIER: I assure the hon. member that his suggestion will be borne in mind.

Vote put and passed.

This concluded the Estimates of the Lands and Repatriation Department.

Colonial Treasurer's Department, Hon. J. Mitchell, Minister, in charge of the Votes.

Vote—Treasury, £10,454:

Item, Under Treasurer and Controller General of Accounts, £756:

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: We should have some explanation from the Premier as to the policy of the Government regarding increases to highly paid officers in the Civil Service. Much of the debate will hinge around the question, owing to the fact that the Government are being besieged with requests from civil servants for increases. Even the teachers propose to come to the bar of the House with their grievances. Other ranks in the civil service are also discontented, because of non-payment of increments and because their increases have been held up. The Committee should not interest itself much in voting increases to men who are already receiving £700 a year. This particular officer may be a paragon so far as finances are concerned, but he has not demonstrated that he is a living wonder

in the monthly summaries of the finances of the State that he prepares. He may be a good civil servant, but that does not justify hon. members in voting him an increase of £48 a year. If the State were in a buoyant position and finances were good and general prospects bright, there might be some justification for recognising the work of these highly paid officers, but there are scores of men in the civil service receiving low salaries who have no chance of getting an increase. Do the Government intend to pursue this policy of giving increases to highly paid officers whilst men on £150 and £200 receive none?

Mr. LUTEY: Is this the officer who was responsible for preparing the Estimates now before the Committee?

The Premier: I must take the responsibility for them.

Mr. LUTEY: If that is so, the Premier has misled the Committee in saying that he thought they were being brought down as they have formerly come before us. A definite promise was made last year that these Estimates would be itemised.

The PREMIER: I cannot accept the responsibility for any promise that was given last year, but I am prepared to accept the responsibility for the Estimates as they are presented this year. I agree that there ought to be the added columns, and I promise that this will appear in next year's Estimates. I have already given instructions to that effect.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The information about the officers themselves should appear.

The PREMIER: The information should appear in the same way as it appeared in the Estimates of 1916, and I have given instructions to that effect. With regard to the point raised by the member for Forrest, all officers under the Public Service Act who were not on the maximum were given a grade increase. This officer is not under the Public Service Act. In fact, several heads of departments are not under that Act. The Public Service Commissioner thought that other permanent heads should be granted a grade increase. This is one of these. Nothing has been done for these officers for about seven years. It is true that a man on £700 a year can live more comfortably in these days than one on £300 a year, but these higher paid officers must look for some reward.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Are you going to treat them all alike?

The PREMIER: Yes. No grade rises in the immediate future will go to men on £700 a year. If I am able to give grade increases this year it will not be to men on this mark.

Mr. Duff: What was the salary of this officer's predecessor?

The PREMIER: I think it was £800 a year.

Mr. Duff: Then he is receiving a reduced salary?

The PREMIER: Yes, I think he was allowed to draw the Imperial pay of £160

a year, but that now goes to the Government.

Mr. ANGELO: This officer is practically the leading man controlling the finances of the State. According to the revenue and expenditure of Western Australia he has to control between four million and five million pounds. That is the turnover of the business concern of which this officer is the permanent head.

Mr. Smith: He has no responsibility at all.

Mr. ANGELO: He has a great deal of responsibility, and no man in charge of a private concern, of which the capital is as big as this, would be asked to do the work for so little. The present occupant of the position took it up in 1914, when the war started. He has had considerable anxiety and work throughout his tenure of office. It has come to my knowledge that within a few months of his accepting the position he drew the attention of the Government to the method by which £1,500 a year could be saved in connection with the State Savings Bank. As a result of his recommendation the State has saved about £9,000 already. The fact is on record that this officer has saved some £20,000 since he was appointed Under Treasurer.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I would not have discussed this officer but for the special pleading of the hon. member for Gascoyne. The hon. member has said too much or not enough and he should have given the source of his information. I do not see anything in any of the reports with regard to the savings which have been referred to by the hon. member. Comparisons have been made with the officer's predecessor, but it has to be remembered that the former Under Treasurer, Mr. Eliot, was a very old servant of the State with 52 years' service to his credit and he was drawing £850 per annum when he retired. I do not like making comparisons, but if the hon. member knew the two officers he would not have drawn any comparisons. It has to be remembered also that the present occupant of the office before receiving his present position was in receipt of £400 a year.

Mr. Smith: Who appointed him?

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Government of which I was a member. It may be that this was just the one foolish thing that we did, but I do not wish to distinguish between this officer and other highly paid officers. I do not register my protest against the increase which he has been given, and I should like to have the testimony of the present Treasurer's predecessor as to whether it ought to be made.

Item, Clerks—Head office £4,153:

Hon. P. COLLIER: This item shows an increase over the amount spent last year of more than £1,400. It is due to the Premier to make some explanation about this increase.

The PREMIER: Grade increases were responsible for £60. Two officers transferred

to the Lands Department represent £408, and four returned soldiers represent £556, making a total of £1,030. The increase of £556 is more than covered by what was paid for temporary clerical assistance which is no longer required. The employment of returned soldiers means of course that temporary clerks in some cases have had to be put off and this is one of those instances.

Mr. O'Loghlen: And there are some very hard cases amongst them, too.

The PREMIER: I quite agree that it does work some hardship, but it cannot be avoided. The transfer to the Lands Department is due to the fact that the Treasury is now paying all accounts for the Colonial Secretary's Department, which means a saving there.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The expenditure on temporary clerical assistance last year amounted to £1,500, and that sum was greatly in excess of the amount spent in the previous year. Whenever we see an increase in a permanent item, we are always told that there has been a reduction in temporary clerical assistance. That is the stereotyped official departmental reply, but if one examines the items it will be seen that it is not so. Will the Premier look at the item of the year before? If he does he will see that there was spent £227 and the House voted £187. Last year there was expended £1,518, so that the item was exceeded by £1,300.

Mr. Duff: What is the good of passing a vote?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Now they ask for £900, and having spent £1,500 last year they say "We are saving £600." That is their method of effecting economies. First they say they can get through on £187. They spend £1,500 and in the next year they reduce that £1,500 to £900 and say, "Look at the saving we are making." The column which used to show the vote in comparison with the expenditure has been deliberately left out at the instigation of officers in the Government Service so as to withhold information from the House. Hon. members should see at a glance what the vote was and what the expenditure was. It is a very important matter to know, but now the information is no longer available. It has been deliberately omitted. The Committee is stultifying itself in discussing Estimates in these circumstances. We are encouraging this kind of thing year by year by discussing Estimates which mean nothing. For the first time in 14 years we are discussing the Estimates without having the Public Accounts before us. I would like to know whether that quarrel or dispute or misunderstanding with the Auditor General has been fixed up.

The Premier: The Public Accounts are being printed now.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I think we should have the Public Accounts before the Estimates are proceeded with any further. The Estimates have been before the House for

four weeks and if the dispute has not been fixed up in that period I would like to know what is being done. Are they indifferent to the preparation of the Public Accounts or are they withholding information which the House is entitled to have? The Estimates do not bear out the explanation supplied to the Premier showing a reduction from £1,500 to £900.

Item, Messengers, head office, £130:

Mr. SMITH: The saving on this item is £2. Why is there such anxiety to cut down the small man and raise the salary of the big man?

The PREMIER: All the messengers get a fixed amount. Probably there has been some change. If I find there has been a reduction, I shall have the matter rectified.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Audit Department, £9,830.

Item, Clerks, £3,019:

Hon. P. COLLIER: The number of clerks is increased by six. This is a big increase for a small department, but, if it will mean the acceleration of the preparation of the Auditor General's report so that it will be presented before Parliament deals with the Estimates, I shall willingly vote the amount.

The PREMIER: The increase is due apart from statutory increases, to £244 paid for relieving officers in the A.I.F., and £722 for the reinstatement of officers returning from the Front. Some departments managed without appointing men to take the places of those away on leave.

Hon. W. C. ANGIN: We have been told that the men on active service were paid out of the temporary vote and that, when they returned, they would be paid from the ordinary vote and the temporary vote would be reduced accordingly. I am sorry the Auditor General's salary is provided for under a special Act. If it had not been so provided, I would have moved to strike it out until he presented his report. If the six extra clerks will enable him to present his report before the Estimates are dealt with, I shall not oppose the increase. It is about time Parliament took a hand and insisted on having the Auditor General's report before the Estimates are discussed.

Item, Temporary clerical and other assistance, including provision for temporary officers who may be appointed to permanent positions and who, when appointed, will be paid from the vote if provision is not made elsewhere, £410:

Hon. P. COLLIER: It has been the practice throughout the war period to say that the places of permanent officers at the war have been filled by temporary men, and consequently the vote for temporary clerical assistance has increased. Now the Premier has explained, in connection with the increase of clerks in this department, that of the increase £722 is made up of salaries to permanent officers who have returned from the

war. There ought to be a reduction in the vote for temporary clerical assistance when men are returning and taking up their old duties, but instead there is an increase from £277 to £410. All these items of temporary assistance should show a reduction and not an increase, but in practically all there is an increase.

The PREMIER: The increase includes £27 statutory increases.

Hon. P. Collier: There are no statutory increases to temporary men.

The PREMIER: The item for officers temporarily attached to the department, in lieu of those absent with the expeditionary force, shows a decrease of £800.

Item, Messenger, £47:

Mr. LUTEY: What is the status of this messenger who has been increased from £39 to £47? I should think it was a scabby wage. Does the Premier think it a decent wage?

The PREMIER: This is a young boy making a small start. Any boy who passes the Public Service examination has an opportunity to enter the service as a clerk.

Vote put and passed.

Vote — Compassionate allowances, etc., £3,271.

Item, Troy, Mrs., widow of D. J. Troy, late messenger Legislative Assembly, £150:

Hon. G. TAYLOR: While I am pleased the Government have placed this item on the Estimates, I do not think a lump sum of £150 would be of any permanent service to a widow with three young children. I have interested myself in this case so far that, a few days after the death of this officer, I wrote to the Premier. As Speaker of the House, Mr. Troy was directly under my control; he was not under the Public Service Act. If we voted a lump sum to the widow, it would not last very long. I would prefer some more permanent provision being made covering four or five years, until the eldest child is able to do for itself. I should not expect an item of £150 each year. The services of the late Mr. Troy dated back to 1904, and he worked himself up to the position of Chief Messenger with great rapidity and filled the office with great credit. I shall leave that to the judgment of members who came into contact with him. It is impossible for a young man, starting here as a boy and being cut off at so early an age, to make that provision for his wife and family which he would have made if spared. Although he was not under the Public Service Act, yet certain privileges of that Act are extended to those employed at Parliament House. If he had been in the Public Service he would have had an allowance approximate to what is on the Estimates. It is for the Committee to consider whether I was justified in making an appeal to the Government for the necessary provision. I wrote to the Premier on the 18th August, a few days after the death of the late Mr. Troy, asking the Premier to make some provision for the widow and children over the next few years. The Premier has

acted very generously in placing this amount on the Estimates, but I think it would be well if the Committee expressed its views as a guidance for the Premier with regard to what is necessary for the maintenance of those young children for the next three or five years. The Government have done as much for this officer's widow as they would have done in respect of an officer under the Act. I do not think any dangerous precedent would be established by the carrying out of my suggestion. Only three or four officers would be concerned, even if this were taken as a precedent. Had the late Mr. Troy been engaged anywhere else when death overtook him, and if his widow and children had been thrown on to the State, it would have meant the disbursement of a larger amount through the Charities Department. I do not think the widow and children of so faithful and efficient an officer as the late Mr. Troy should have to avail themselves of the Charities Department. I ask hon. members to express their views on the case and say whether it would not be wise to instruct the Government to make a recurring allowance of, say, £75 or £100 per annum for the next few years. I thank the Premier for the courtesy extended to me during the correspondence and personal interviews I have had with him on the subject. He expressed a desire to do all he could for the late Mr. Troy's widow and family. I, as the direct employer of the late Mr. Troy, would be lacking in my duty if I did not place the true position of his widow and family before the Committee while this vote is under discussion.

The PREMIER: I realise that £150 is very little, and that the late Mr. Troy did exceedingly good work, at the same time earning only a small salary. I am also aware that he was unable to save much, seeing that he had a wife and three young children. The position is difficult, inasmuch as we cannot treat the widow and children of the late Mr. Troy any differently from, say, the relatives of an ordinary officer. Still, if hon. members like to make any representations, I will consider their wishes in the matter, although it is a little difficult to do more than we propose to do.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Speaking for every member on this side of the House, I endorse the sentiments expressed by the member for Mt. Margaret. It would be doing bare justice to the widow and family of the late chief messenger if a somewhat more substantial provision were made for them than appears on the Estimates. I realise the difficulty the Premier has in allocating a sum of money for the purpose, but I do not think we should be making any invidious distinction, because repeatedly there have appeared on the Estimates, compassionate allowances, even on a much more generous scale than this, taking into consideration the difference in positions. This Committee has on more than one occasion voted what might be called a gratuity,

where there was practically no obligation at all, to the widow and family of a deceased officer of the Public Service. If Mr. Troy had been in the Public Service, I understand it would have been possible to have provided a larger sum. I think it would be advisable to make an allowance covering two or three years, because, after all, a lump sum such as this is not of very much use to a widow faced with the problem of raising a young family. Although it is marked "final" in the Estimates, there will be nothing to prevent the Government placing the item there again next year. Of course, if passed as final, that is to say without any explanation, the Government would be justified in not providing the item next year. I hope the Premier will see his way to making a more liberal provision than we have here. If he does so it will meet with the approval of every member.

Mr. HARDWICK: I should like to support the suggestions of the member for Mr. Margaret and the leader of the Opposition. I know this case particularly well and am well acquainted with the widow. Mr. Troy's father died a few years ago, leaving a young family, of whom Mr. Troy was the eldest. Great credit is due to the late Mr. Troy in that he was a most excellent son. Even during the married term of his life he assisted his aged mother and younger brothers and sisters. I think it would be much better if an amount were spread over a number of years.

Mr. HARRISON: I support the suggestions made. I agree that the amount allocated should be spread over a number of years.

The PREMIER: I suggest that we let the item stand as it is now, and I will consider the question of putting a further item on next year's Estimates.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Government Savings Bank, £10,337:

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: At the last Premiers' Conference the question of Savings Bank amalgamation was discussed. Can the Premier give any information as to what took place, and whether any arrangements were made for the suggested amalgamation?

The PREMIER: No. No arrangement has been come to in regard to an amalgamation of the banks.

Hon. P. Collier: The matter has not been advanced at all?

The PREMIER: No.

Item, Acting Manager and Accountant, £360:

Mr. SMITH: The Government Savings Bank is one of the most important institutions we have, handling, as it does, considerable sums of money belonging chiefly to the people. It is necessary that the bank should be well managed. For two or three

years it has been controlled by an acting manager. Although I have expressed myself strongly against the principle of increasing the salaries of heads of departments, I think I am justified in drawing attention to the exceedingly small salary paid to the officer acting as manager. Actually, the salary of the manager of a bank handling millions of money is £7 per week. Dozens of firms in this city pay their chief clerks better. The managers of the Associated Banks, I believe, all draw over £1,000 per annum. Further, it is most unfair to keep the officer hanging on in an acting capacity. Mr. Leschen, it has been stated in this Chamber, will never return to the position. No Government would dare to put him back there. As manager he drew over £500 a year, and the present manager is worth at least as much. Unfortunately, the Committee cannot increase an item; otherwise, I feel sure, this salary would be raised to a decent amount by hon. members unanimously.

The PREMIER: I do not propose to try to justify this item, but I propose to fill the position permanently in the course of a few weeks. Permanent positions have not been filled for a considerable time, owing to so many men being away at the Front. The acting manager is an excellent officer, and his services will not be lost sight of.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I take it that, in addition to the salary shown in this item, the acting manager receives the usual allowance, under the Public Service regulations, of half the difference between his own salary and the salary of the position he is filling temporarily.

The Premier: I think so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am glad the position is to be filled permanently in the course of a few weeks, because it is most unsatisfactory to have an officer in an acting capacity for so long a period. Moreover, the salary which has been paid him is utterly inadequate.

Mr. Hudson: I think an additional amount of salary is provided for him in the item "Extra remuneration under Public Service regulations 33 and 79."

Hon. P. COLLIER: It seems so. Even then, however, his salary is very low. I may mention that I do not know this officer personally at all.

Item, Cashier, £264.

Mr. SMITH: Here we have another underpaid official, and the case is even worse than the preceding one. Evidently the officers of the Government Savings Bank have no friends at court. These Estimates show officers with far less responsibility—such as the secretary to the Kalgoorlie Hospital, and the assistant inspector of rabbits—drawing the same salary as the cashier of the Government Savings Bank. I believe in paying a man what his work is worth.

Item, Managers, £2,265:

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: On this item I raise the same objection as the member for North Perth has just voiced.

Mr. Smith: This item represents a dozen managers.

Mr. ANGWIN: The manager of the Government Savings Bank at Fremantle receives £264 per annum, and the same salary is paid to the Kalgoorlie and Boulder managers. The average for 13 managers is about £174 per annum. Certainly they are not paid sufficient to do good work. What does the "a" attached to the item refer to? I am unable to find a corresponding footnote. As an old bank manager, the Premier must recognise that these salaries are utterly inadequate. The manager of the Fremantle savings bank is, to my personal knowledge, a thorough worker. Before the Fremantle office opens, he has been around the town visiting suburban branches. The salary is altogether too small for the position.

Mr. DAVIES: I must protest against these glaring anomalies. These officers act as managers treasury paymasters, land officers, etc. I believe the bank manager at Midland Junction is also a Treasury official. This officer in particular is underpaid.

The PREMIER: These officers are land agents and Treasury paymasters, and in some cases get an allowance. If they do get an allowance it is for post office work and Treasury work. I will go into the salaries of these officers under the Savings Bank, especially in view of the fact that the Committee is unanimous on the point that they are underpaid.

Mr. HARRISON: Has not the item dealing with allowances to officers for extra attendance on Saturday night, Perth branches and agencies, something to do with this item?

Item, Cleaners £96:

Mr. JONES: This item is in connection with four cleaners, and there is an increase of £1 shown. Is this a graded increase? In what way are these cleaners occupied? Who are they and what are their duties?

The PREMIER: These are cleaners in the different branch land offices. They are partly paid under this vote and partly under the Lands vote.

Mr. Jones: I cannot find any cleaners under the Lands vote.

The Minister for Works: The cleaners in Perth are paid for by the Public Works Department.

Mr. JONES: This is another instance of the inadequate way in which these Estimates have been prepared.

Item, Commission payable to agents, £4,100:

Mr. ANGELO: I notice that there are 14 managers of savings banks, and as there are 200 branches in the State there must be a considerable number of agencies throughout the State. I know that the agencies of the savings bank in some towns are domiciled in the branch offices of one of the

incorporated banks. That system is wrong. The incorporated bank has its own deposits in the same way as the savings bank. It accepts deposits on short terms or other terms, giving just the same interest as, if not more than, the savings bank. When a savings bank customer comes along it is quite possible for the incorporated bank to take the business itself. I know that customers of the savings bank have been kept waiting a long time whilst the customers of the incorporated bank are attended to. That does not tend to popularise the State institution. In other parts of the State there are Government officials located in a particular place, and a savings bank agent as well. In such a case the agency should be transferred to the Government official and a certain amount of expense thus saved. I hope some method will be adopted to obviate the present position of affairs.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The Premier might take this opportunity of explaining the present position regarding the conduct of State savings banks in competition with Commonwealth institutions and their post office agencies. The system now adopted is a great reflection upon the Government and Parliament, and this dual control is inimical to the interests of the State institution. It is time that the matter was adjusted. When the general manager of the Commonwealth Bank was here he was eulogised by the Government, but the opportunity should have been sought to put this matter right. This farcical proceeding should be brought to a close. The State cannot expect to get a fair deal under the present competitive system.

The Premier: Can you discuss that on this item?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: When the competitive system started the State appointed the managers of the incorporated banks to act for them, and also appointed various storekeepers and other people to act as agents. In the timber country the accountants of timber companies were appointed as agents, and rather than reveal his circumstances to the accountant of his company the employee would prefer to go to the post office with his deposits, for no questions are asked there. Similarly, in a town where the storekeeper was acting as agent for the State savings bank a man might owe that storekeeper £50 but desire to make a deposit of £5. Is it likely he would go to the storekeeper to bank his £5 when he could go to the post office and do so? Does this sort of thing bring grist to the State institution? In my opinion it has driven business away to the Federal Savings Banks because of the facilities offered by the Federal Post offices in the country centres.

The Premier: I quite agree with the hon. member.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Yes, but the old system continues. How long will it go on? If the Government will take a stand and

bring the matter to a final issue and give a fair deal to the State, the whole House will be behind them.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Do you expect to get a fair deal from the Federal Government?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: We ought to get something approaching a fair deal. This penny wise and pound foolish policy should be cut out altogether. I should like to know if the Premier discussed this matter with the general manager of the Commonwealth Bank. I do not think the Commonwealth institution should have started in opposition to the State, because the State Savings bank had good facilities for conducting the business. If an amalgamation is not possible we should reduce the cost of administration, and also exercise the utmost care in making a judicious selection of agents.

The Minister for Works: I have it all down.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: And that is as far as it is likely to go. The Minister has been putting things down for the last 50 years. The bank should make the most exhaustive inquiries before selecting their agents. People, I am sure, are patriotic enough to bank with the State Savings Bank if there is a reasonable degree of secrecy and if facilities are given.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And they get half per cent. more than the Commonwealth Bank pays.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Government stores, £13,127.

Item, Secretary, Tender Board, £276:

Mr. SMITH: Is the secretary responsible for the existing method of obtaining tenders? I would draw attention to the system at present in vogue. It is very unsatisfactory and many of our business people are complaining about it. When it is proposed to call tenders for any particular article an officer of the department is told off to go to the various places where that article is manufactured. He goes with a notebook and asks for the prices. If that is the system which is in force I can only say there is plenty of room for improvement. There is no secrecy about it and there is nothing to prevent the officer leaving his notebook about, so that an opponent may get hold of it. On account of this system there have been instances where forged tenders have been put in. Perhaps the Colonial Secretary does not know that. Forged tenders have been submitted for the purpose of raising the price of a particular article against a firm. In that way the department have been misled. The Minister should see that in future a proper system of secrecy is carried out so that manufacturers may receive every protection.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I agree with most of the remarks made by the hon. member. There is, however, necessity for sending round for prices. During the period of the war available supplies were so short

that they had really to be hunted up. Ordinary persons who had put in their prices were out of stock, and the material had to be obtained to keep workmen going. I was assured that there was no possibility of a competitor seeing the prices that another man had given. I know that many years ago, when I was in business a somewhat similar thing was going on. I have been informed by Mr. Anderson, however, that this kind of thing has been stopped.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: All requirements do not go through the stores.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There must be some departure from the ordinary routine of getting quotations and obtaining material. We have in the Works Department two or three very reliable men as foremen, and when they are doing a job at Fremantle or at Midland and they may require perhaps a box of screws they cannot hold the works up in order to put in a requisition for them. They purchase them in the best way they can. The department may have to pay a little more, or perhaps considerably more in some cases.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I refer to supplies for institutions.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I know nothing at all about those. In Mr. Anderson, who is in charge of the stores, the Government have a very keen buyer. I feel sure that, if he were here, he would be able to give perfectly satisfactory explanations.

Mr. SMITH: It would be quite a simple matter to obtain tenders in sealed envelopes for small items. I complain of the manner in which quotations are obtained in a notebook. The notebook system was in force only last month.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Literary and Scientific Grants, etc., £3,230.

Item, Mechanics' institutes, etc., £130:

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: In connection with this item I seek the redemption of a promise. The Government laid it down that there were to be no more grants towards mechanics' institutes, but some considerable time before that decision was arrived at the then Colonial Treasurer, Mr. Gardiner, agreed to place on the Estimates a sum of £50 towards the Allanson mechanics' institute. The residents built the hall entirely at their own cost, and, later, six out of seven committee men went to the war.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That does not come under this Vote.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Nevertheless, the hon. member might allow me this opportunity of securing a promise.

The PREMIER: The matter does not come under this Vote. I advise the hon. member to watch the Works Estimates.

Item, Zoological Gardens, £2,975:

Mr. PICKERING: This item shows no revenue at all. Do the zoological gardens earn no revenue?

The PREMIER: This item represents Government aid to the gardens. The revenue is received by the board of trustees.

Item, Acclimatisation of fish, birds, and animals, £75:

Mr. CHESSON: This is a very small grant for such a purpose. Mr. Kingsmill has done great work for the State in placing fish in all permanent streams, and also in the whole of the dams throughout the Murchison district.

The PREMIER: I realise that a great deal of work might be done in this connection.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Will you increase the item?

The PREMIER: I cannot promise to do so in the present state of the finances.

Mr. O'LOUGHLEN: Mr. Kingsmill has rendered magnificent voluntary service in the matter of acclimatisation, travelling over the length and breadth of the State half-a-dozen times. If the necessary financial assistance were provided, the work might be extended.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Taxation, £23,855:

Mr. MUNSIE: During the discussion on this vote last year, I drew the attention of the then Treasurer, Mr. Gardiner, to the impossible conditions prevailing throughout the State—conditions which could be relieved without extra cost to the Government. He agreed with me and assured me something would be done, but so far nothing has been done. Irrespective of what part of the State a taxpayer resides in, he has to supply his taxation returns to the Perth office, and a reply is sent from Perth. If there is 9d. to pay, that amount has to be remitted to Perth. I do not object to the returns being sent to Perth in order that the first assessment might be made, but there are Treasury officials all over the State who could receive the amount of the tax and give a receipt for it, and forward a copy of the receipt to the head office in Perth. Last year I mentioned two instances, and three have since come under my notice, of the hardships inflicted by the system of having to remit the money to Perth. A woman who owed taxation to the amount of 16s. obtained a postal note and posted it to the Commissioner of Taxation. Six or eight weeks later, a final notice was received threatening legal proceedings within a certain time if the amount were not paid. The woman had failed to register the letter and had to pay again. Why should people have to register letters to Perth when there are Treasury officials in most of these towns? Regarding the returns supplied by the Commissioner of Taxation, it seems to me there is something in the direction of deliberate intention to withhold certain information to which we are entitled. Last year we altered the incidence of taxation. Recently I asked the Premier—

Will he supply the same information for the twelfth assessment under the Income

Tax Act as is supplied in the ninth and tenth assessments under table "D" in the eleventh annual report of the Commissioner of Taxation of persons earning between £200 and £299?

The Premier replied—

The Commissioner of Taxation states that the figures asked for under table "D" of his eleventh annual report in respect to incomes of those earning £201 to £299 were not separately tabulated, having been merged with a larger group. The information could not be supplied without entailing great additional work.

I do not wish to press for that information if it will mean additional cost. During the progress of the Income Tax Bill through this House, I opposed strongly the wiping out of the £200 exemption and pointed out what that would mean to men earning £4 a week and less. I naturally expected that the report of the Commissioner of Taxation for this year would have shown what amount this meant to the men earning £4 a week and under but, under the table supplied by the Commissioner, it is not possible to obtain the information, and I want to know the reason why. The information was given in respect to the ninth and the tenth assessments but, when we come to the twelfth assessment, the Commissioner starts off by giving the number of persons earning between £101 and £199, and the amount earned, etc. Then he goes on to deal with the same figures for those earning £200 to £299, and £300 to £499. Why? Simply to prevent us from getting the information to show how much people earning £4 a week and under have paid of the excess income tax collected this year. I have managed to work out the amount approximately, and I find that the extra amount collected was no less than £52,090. If we had the correct figures supplied by the Taxation Department, I believe the total would approach, as I forecasted last year, £80,000. The Commissioner's return, table "G," gives some interesting information regarding the amount of income tax paid, especially when it is considered in conjunction with the Prices Regulation Bill and the allegations that manufacturers and merchants were not making excessive profits. This return shows that while in 1916 185 merchants and manufacturers paid £11,167, in 1918 there were 204 merchants and manufacturers who paid £25,222 in income tax. In two years their income, on what they had to pay a tax, had doubled.

The Attorney General: No, the graduated tax did that.

Mr. MUNSIE: The graduations have not made much difference in this amount to these individuals. In 1916 there were 359 pastoralists and graziers who paid an income tax of £34,352. In 1918 the number had increased to 454 persons, who paid an income tax amounting to £104,615. In 1916 there were 9,142 salary and wage earners, and in 1918 there were 23,919. In 1916 the wage earners and salaried men in the State paid

income tax amounting to £16,977, whereas in 1918 they paid £73,586. It was the wiping out of the exemptions which accounted for more than that difference.

The Attorney General: The wiping out of the exemption makes a difference in the other.

Mr. MUNSIE: These figures are very misleading, for we cannot compare them with other years. I hope that when the next table is supplied by the Commissioner of Taxation, we shall be able to find out the exact difference that the wiping out of the £200 exemption has made to the man on £204 a year. It is not fair to the working population of the State that the Government should make the statement that the wiping out of the exemption would not mean to men earning £4 a week and under more than £20,000 at the outside. The return submitted proves that the wiping out of the exemption has meant a difference, at all events, of £56,000.

The PREMIER: I will see if I can get the information the hon. member requires. I intend to go into the whole question of simplifying the payments and the making out of returns.

Mr. MONEY: When the last Estimates were before us I referred to the duplication of the Taxation Departments and the taxation assessments. I was informed by the then Premier that the matter had reached a stage when some amalgamation might be expected.

The Premier: Negotiations are still going on.

Mr. MONEY: We have expended on the State Taxation Department £23,000. As an example of the waste of public funds and the people's time, nothing could be more striking than our present system of taxation generally, for we have a State and Federal assessment for land tax and a road board assessment as well. All these returns should be furnished on the one form. In the name of the people who have suffered from this in the past, I wish to enter my protest.

Mr. SMITH: I wish to add my protest to that of the member for Bunbury with regard to the present system of conducting our taxation office. This department is responsible for providing much of the money to carry on the functions of Government. Seeing that the Government are always in such an impecunious state, it is desirable that every effort should be made to get in all possible revenue. Owing to the lax system of collecting taxes, the State is losing a considerable amount every year. Although the department has been in existence for the past 13 years, 20 per cent. of the land has never yet paid any tax. The writ list every week contains a record of cases in which the Commissioner of Taxation is seeking to recover land tax ten or 12 years old. At present the road boards and municipalities collect what is practically a land tax from every holding in the State, and there is no reason why they

should not collect the land tax for the Government at the same time. It would not cost anything like what it costs now, and the tax would be actually collected.

The Minister for Works: Why do not you go and see Mr. Owen?

Mr. SMITH: It is not my place to do so. My duty is to scrutinise these Estimates and, where possible, make suggestions. It is practicable here to save a considerable amount of money. Many land owners do not send in any returns at all, and many others get the time extended by six months. In all it takes the department about a year and nine months to collect so much as it does collect of the land tax. This delay would be saved if the collection of land tax were left to the local authorities.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.20 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 29th October, 1919.

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

QUESTION—STOCK ROUTES.

Hon. H. CARSON (for Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom) asked the Minister for Education: 1, Whether declared stock routes are Government reserves? 2, If pastoral lessees, in whose leases stock routes are declared, pay rent for the portion included in the stock route? 3, What is the recognised width of a stock route?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: 1, Yes. 2, No. 3, One mile or over outside the South-West Division; a quarter of a mile or less inside the South-West Division.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. H. Carson, leave of absence granted to the Hon. J. A. Greig (South-West) for six consecutive sittings of the House on the ground of urgent private business.